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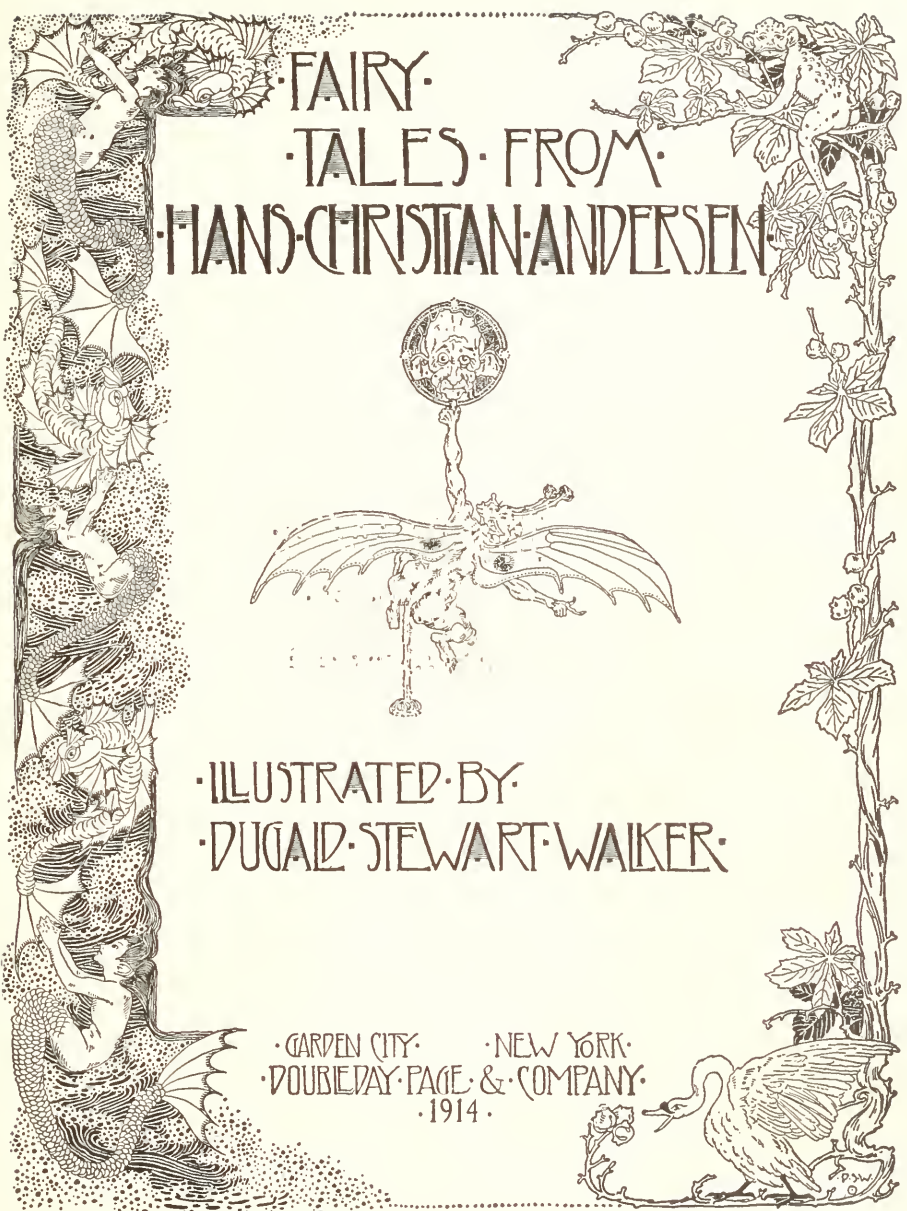
She would have nothing besides the rosy flowers like the sun up above,
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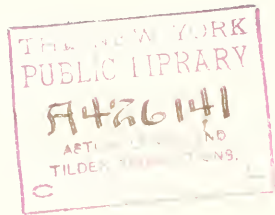
·FAIRY·
·TALES·FROM·
·HANS·CHRISTIAN·ANDERSEN·



·ILLUSTRATED·BY·
·DUGALD·STEWART·WALKER·

·GARDEN CITY · NEW YORK ·
·DOUBLEDAY · PAGE · & · COMPANY ·
· 1914 ·





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TO AVIS
MY MOTHER

I have never been anywhere except Richmond, Virginia, and New York, because I have always been told that only grown-up people were allowed to travel. But the good East Wind and the kindly Moon have taken me on rapturous journeys high above the world to get an enchanted view of things. In this book I have put some of my discoveries, but if you are looking here for real likeness of the things that any one could see if he were grown up, you had better close the covers now. You cannot expect me to draw an exact picture of the North Pole or of a Chinese lady's feet or of a sea-cucumber. But if you are interested in what the East Wind or the Father Stork or the Moon told me, then look with my eyes and you will not mind very much if the courtiers in the ogre's court, or the dock leaves in the Garden of Paradise, are not just as a grown-up person thinks they should be. After all is said and done, what the young ones say about it is the all-important matter.



Publisher's Note

Mr. Walker saw much more in these inimitable stories of Hans Christian Andersen than most people dream of. His imagination, taking flight from the words of the tale, soared into a distant fairy-land. Some things Dugald Stewart Walker has told us of his adventures in elfland, and these stories of his pictures, so charmed us that we persuaded him to write some of them down. The following is a description, in the artist's own words, of nine of his pictures.

THE LINING PAPER

FAIRY children are never bad until their second teeth come; and no one knows they are bad then except their mother. She thinks it is very pretty, but of course she pretends she doesn't. If she had a corner she would stand them in it, but as she hasn't, she takes her naughty child's chin in her hand, very gently, and she says: "Child, you have lost your nose. Go look for it at once. And if you don't stick your finger in the hole where your nose used to be before you find it, you will find a pot of gold at the same time." Now fairies, you know, never think; for if they did they would see they could not use a pot of gold if they found one. So before they stop to think, off sails each naughty fairy up into the air to look for its nose with its hands for oars, so that it can't stick its fingers into the hole where its nose used to be. And fanning its wings, it sails straight up into the air, and on still wings drifts down again — and up and down again it sails, looking all over the sky for its nose, which is another proof that it doesn't think, for what, pray, should its nose be doing there? Until by and by it forgets all about the pot of gold and forgets it is using its hands for oars. And then! Well, of course you know what it does at once. Just what you did with your tongue when you lost your tooth.

TAILPIECE, PAGE 41

The merchant's son told the king's daughter about the storks which bring little children up out of the river. But, of course, they weren't in the river in

the first place. They come from away up behind the stars, where the Spring comes from. And up there, sits One (I can't remember much about her, only that she made me think of a dewdrop — not such a dewdrop as you and I can see, but a dewdrop if it were as large as the whole world) and all the children are in her lap. And each one has a little harness made of ribbon. And there are faun babies, and fairy babies, and human babies. The faun's harness is purple like grapes, and the fairies' is silver like bubbles in moonlight, and the human babies' is just pink and blue; and that's how the stork knows which is which. Now, the storks fly up there (it's wonderful, the distance storks can fly) and each one takes a baby in his beak by the loop at the top of the harness. And down he starts, and all the way down the baby practices kicking. But before they start, the One who is like a dewdrop would be if it were as large as the whole world, gives to each baby a dandelion. And she says "When you reach the lowest circle of stars this dandelion will have gone to seed. Then you must blow on it and see what time you will be born." So when they come to the lowest circle of stars, *puff! puff!* blow all the babies on the dandelions which have gone to seed, to see when they will be born. But the down of the dandelion sometimes gets into the storks eyes, and as they haven't any memory to speak of, they make sad mistakes in the places they leave the babies. Sometimes fairies are left with human beings, and some times even fauns — though of that I am not quite sure.

COLOR PLATE, FACING PAGE 50

*"Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on."*

There was a bed with four posts and a boy named Robin slept in it. Long ago he grew too big to sleep in that bed. And since the new bed he slept in had no posts, he thought there were no saints. But some kind of saints every one must have, of course. And one day he saw a glass bowl with four goldfish and he took it home and put it by his new bed, and he called the goldfish Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But he did not think that he was calling them after the saints, only after the four posts he was used to in his old bed. One Spring day this grown up boy's four goldfish died. Many years afterward, as I sat and painted the picture of the angel who came to take little Karen to heaven — the angel who touched the air with a green branch and filled it everywhere with stars — this Robin said to me: "Oh, little Karen's bed is like my old one with the four posts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Have your angel put a gold halo around each post in memory of my four fish."

COLOR PLATE, FACING PAGE 64

*"For he that has his own world,
Has many worlds more."*

A boy called Robin once upon a time asked me to tell him all I knew of the fairies and I told him all I had learned from them. Then he asked: "How did the angel of the flower in this picture get the lovely blue spots that are on his legs and wings?" I showed him a cornflower growing out of a zigzag crack in a garden path that was spotted with sunshine as it came sifting through the branches of a cedar tree. In the tree many birds slept at night. One night six seeds of a cornflower were dropped by a goldfinch out of this tree as he was eating them. The fairy was sleeping under the cedar tree and they fell upon his wings and legs. Just then his mother came along and saw them. Admiring the effect, she whipped out her needle and thread and sewed them on at once so that he might wear them all the time.

COLOR PLATE, FACING PAGE 150

On the river that flows by the little thatched house the fairies have water-lilies growing under the branches of the cherry trees that hang out over the water. The lily-pads catch the cherries that would otherwise fall and be lost. For cherries are the most delightful food for fairies, and all other irresponsible creatures. When those fairies that are transparent have eaten cherries, their stomachs get red outside as well as in. Then they tilt their noses higher than it is safe for human beings to tilt theirs, because *they* have weights in their heels. When they have stuffed themselves as round as marbles, they say, "Cherries are good for the wholesome." No one but a fairy knows where this organ is located, and I fancy they only pretend they have one, to excuse their greediness.

TAILPIECE, PAGE 198

Fairies say: "To play that you are doing something is as nice as doing it." They have a play called L'Envoi, that is quite the nicest of all plays; that is, if you are a fairy. One has a flower whose blooms hang from the stalk like little bells, the others follow in a line that flutters from one side to the other. The leader holds her flower high and calls, "L'Envoi! L'Envoi! L'Envoi!" And whichever side she dips the little bells in, the fairies march in that direction. After they have marched several inches, they lie down and quickly jump up again. Then the leader goes to the end of the line, and the next one

becomes leader, then the third, then the fourth, and so on until each fairy has been the leader once. It sounds very stupid, but if you are a fairy, it is the most delightful play in the whole world. If only human beings weren't so dignified, there are many delightful things they could learn from the fairies. L'Envoi. L'Envoi!

FACING PAGE 204

This is a picture of father stork hastening to tell Mrs. Stork the upsetting scandal. Look closely and you will see fairies sleeping on the waterlily-pads. They never sleep except when they have danced their hands hot — which is very seldom. Then, with a little wince, they stick their hands under a frog's stomach to keep them cool, just as on cold winter nights we stick our hands under the pillows to keep them warm.

FACING PAGE 222

The dragon who posed for this picture had no name; the wiggly thing that grows on his back from his head to his tail is his comb. It wiggled so while he was posing that the fairies discovered that it would make a delightful doormat. If one stood on it only for a second it wiggled all the mud off his feet and so they gave him a name. It was Diplo-door-mat. He rather liked this name, for all his life he had been called just Dragon, which made him feel as though he were in the insurance business and sat on a high stool and wrote in a big book all day.

TAILPIECE, THE END

Instead of second teeth the birds get second feathers, and because they are friends with the fairies they can feather oftener than we can get new teeth. When the feathering time comes the birds have no grown-ups to tie strings to their feathers and pull them out, as they do our teeth, so the fairies pull those that are stubborn and will not fall out. Here stands a gay and debonair creature who pulled the stubborn feathers from the peacock's tail. He left one feather which forms a magic circle. This is a wish of good fortune from the fairies to you. This creature is not conceited, though he looks so. He belongs to the tribe of fairies who eat worms and has just eaten two. That is what gives his stomach its arrogant tilt, and it is in utter defiance of no one at all that he says airily: "The book is finished. I don't care; I'll do another!"

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Fairy Tales From
Hans Christian Andersen



FAR out at sea the water is as blue as the bluest cornflower and as clear as the clearest crystal; but it is very deep, too deep for any cable to fathom, and if many steeples were piled on the top of one another they would not reach from the bed of the sea to the surface of the water. It is down there that the Mermen live.

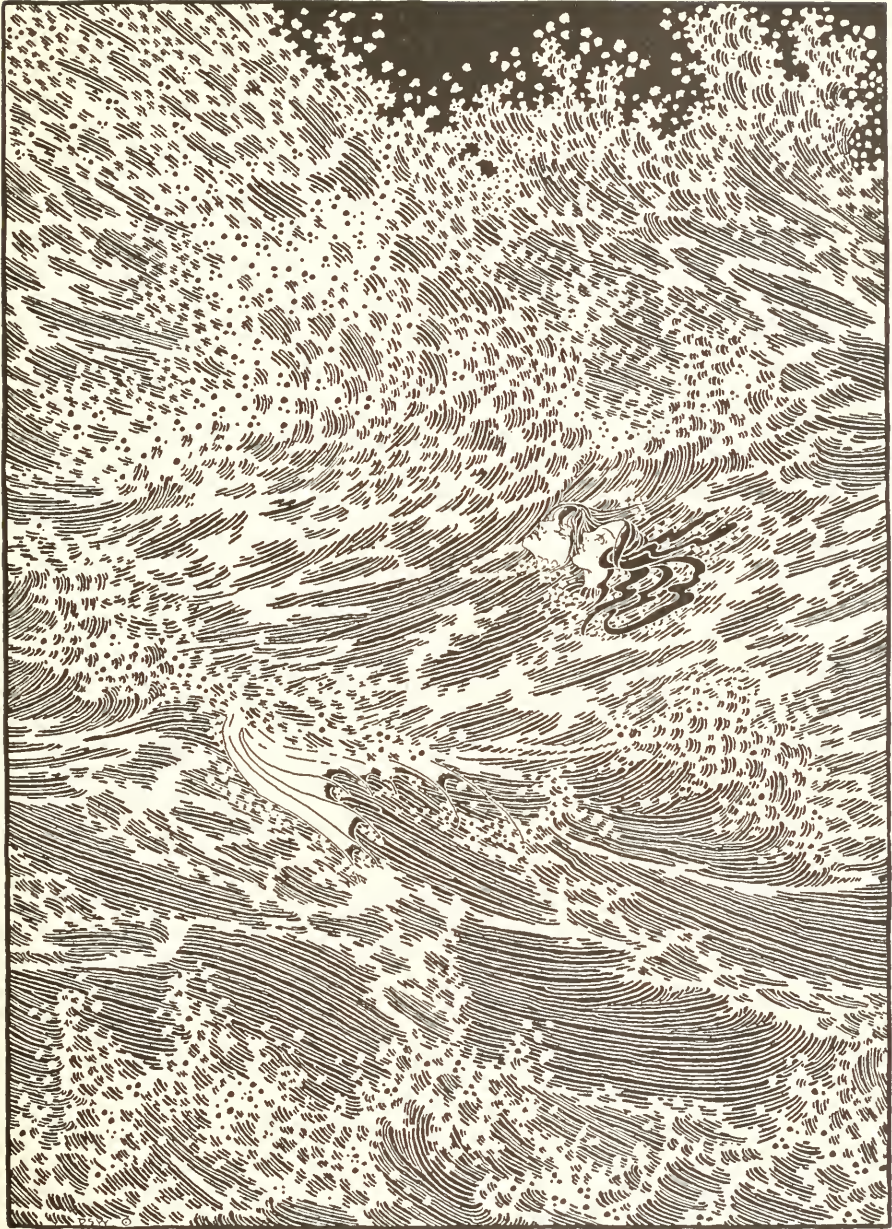
Now don't imagine that there are only bare white sands at the bottom; oh, no! the most wonderful trees and plants grow there, with such flexible stalks and leaves that at the slightest motion of the water they move just as if they were alive. All the fish, big and little, glide among the branches just as, up here, birds glide through air. The palace of the Merman King lies in the very deepest part; its walls are of coral and the long pointed windows of the clearest amber, but the roof is made of mussel shells which open and shut with the lapping of the water. This has a lovely effect, for there are gleaming pearls in every shell, any one of which would be the pride of a queen's crown.

The Merman King had been for many years a widower, but his old mother kept house for him; she was a clever woman, but so proud of her noble birth that she wore twelve oysters on her tail, while the other grandees were only allowed six. Otherwise she was worthy of all praise, especially because she was so fond of the little mermaid princesses, her grandchildren. They were six beautiful children, but the youngest was the prettiest of all, her skin was as soft and delicate as a roseleaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest sea, but like all the others she had no feet, and instead of legs she had a fish's tail.

All the livelong day they used to play in the palace in the great halls, where living flowers grew out of the walls. When the great amber windows were thrown open the fish swam in, just as the swallows fly into our rooms when we open the windows, but the fish swam right up to the little princesses, ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be patted.

Outside the palace was a large garden, with fiery red and deep blue trees, the fruit of which shone like gold, while the flowers glowed like fire on their ceaselessly waving stalks. The ground was of the finest sand, but it was of a blue phosphorescent tint. Everything was bathed in a wondrous blue light down there; you might more readily have supposed yourself to be high up in the air, with only the sky above and below you, than that you were at the bottom of the ocean. In a dead calm you could just catch a glimpse of the sun like a purple flower with a stream of light radiating from its calyx.

Each little princess had her own little plot of garden, where she could dig and plant just as she liked. One made her flower-bed in the shape of a whale, another thought it nice to have hers like a little mermaid; but the youngest made hers quite round like the sun, and she would only have flowers of a rosy hue like its beams. She was a curious child, quiet and thoughtful, and while the other sisters decked out their gardens with all kinds of extraordinary objects which



She held his head above the water and let the waves drive them
whithersoever they would

they got from wrecks, she would have nothing besides the rosy flowers like the sun up above, except a statue of a beautiful boy. It was hewn out of the purest white marble and had gone to the bottom from some wreck. By the statue she planted a rosy red weeping willow which grew splendidly, and the fresh delicate branches hung round and over it, till they almost touched the blue sand where the shadows showed violet, and were ever moving like the branches. It looked as if the leaves and the roots were playfully interchanging kisses.

Nothing gave her greater pleasure than to hear about the world of human beings up above; she made her old grandmother tell her all that she knew about ships and towns, people and animals. But above all it seemed strangely beautiful to her that up on the earth the flowers were scented, for they were not so at the bottom of the sea; also that the woods were green, and that the fish which were to be seen among the branches could sing so loudly and sweetly that it was a delight to listen to them. You see the grandmother called little birds fish, or the mermaids would not have understood her, as they had never seen a bird.

“When you are fifteen,” said the grandmother, “you will be allowed to rise up from the sea and sit on the rocks in the moonlight, and look at the big ships sailing by, and you will also see woods and towns.”

One of the sisters would be fifteen in the following year, but the others — well, they were each one year younger than the other, so that the youngest had five whole years to wait before she would be allowed to come up from the bottom, to see what things were like on earth. But each one promised the others to give a full account of all that she had seen and found most wonderful on the first day. Their grandmother could never tell them enough, for there were so many things about which they wanted information.

None of them was so full of longings as the youngest, the very one who had the longest time to wait, and who was so

quiet and dreamy. Many a night she stood by the open windows and looked up through the dark blue water which the fish were lashing with their tails and fins. She could see the moon and the stars, it is true; their light was pale, but they looked much bigger through the water than they do to our eyes. When she saw a dark shadow glide between her and them, she knew that it was either a whale swimming above her, or else a ship laden with human beings. I am certain they never dreamt that a lovely little mermaid was standing down below, stretching up her white hands toward the keel.

The eldest princess had now reached her fifteenth birthday, and was to venture above the water. When she came back she had hundreds of things to tell them, but the most delightful of all, she said, was to lie in the moonlight, on a sandbank in a calm sea, and to gaze at the large town close to the shore, where the lights twinkled like hundreds of stars; to listen to music and the noise and bustle of carriages and people, to see the many church towers and spires, and to hear the bells ringing; and just because she could not go on shore she longed for that most of all.

Oh! how eagerly the youngest sister listened, and when, later in the evening she stood at the open window and looked up through the dark blue water, she thought of the big town with all its noise and bustle, and fancied that she could even hear the church bells ringing.

The year after, the second sister was allowed to mount up through the water and swim about wherever she liked. The sun was just going down when she reached the surface, the most beautiful sight, she thought, that she had ever seen. The whole sky had looked like gold, she said, and as for the clouds! well, their beauty was beyond description, they floated in red and violet splendour over her head, and, far faster than they went, a flock of wild swans flew like a long white veil over the water toward the setting sun; she swam toward it, but it sank and all the rosy light on clouds and water faded away.

The year after that the third sister went up, and being much the most venturesome of them all, swam up a broad river which ran into the sea. She saw beautiful green, vine-clad hills; palaces and country seats peeping through splendid woods. She heard the birds singing, and the sun was so hot that she was often obliged to dive, to cool her burning face. In a tiny bay she found a troop of little children running about naked and paddling in the water; she wanted to play with them, but they were frightened and ran away. Then a little black animal came up; it was a dog, but she had never seen one before; it barked so furiously at her that she was frightened and made for the open sea. She could never forget the beautiful woods, the green hills, and the lovely children who could swim in the water although they had no fishes' tails.

The fourth sister was not so brave; she stayed in the remotest part of the ocean, and, according to her account, that was the most beautiful spot. You could see for miles and miles around you, and the sky above was like a great glass dome. She had seen ships, but only far away, so that they looked like sea-gulls. There were grotesque dolphins turning somersaults, and gigantic whales squirting water through their nostrils like hundreds of fountains on every side.

Now the fifth sister's turn came. Her birthday fell in the winter, so that she saw sights that the others had not seen on their first trips. The sea looked quite green, and large icebergs were floating about, each one of which looked like a pearl, she said, but was much bigger than the church towers built by men. They took the most wonderful shapes, and sparkled like diamonds. She had seated herself on one of the largest, and all the passing ships sheered off in alarm when they saw her sitting there with her long hair streaming loose in the wind.

In the evening the sky became overcast with dark clouds; it thundered, and lightened, and the huge icebergs, glittering in the bright lightning, were lifted high into the air by the

black waves. All the ships shortened sail, and there was fear and trembling on every side, but she sat quietly on her floating iceberg watching the blue lightning flash in zigzags down on to the shining sea.

The first time any of the sisters rose above the water she was delighted by the novelties and beauties she saw; but once grown up, and at liberty to go where she liked, she became indifferent and longed for her home; in the course of a month or so they all said that after all their own home in the deep was best, it was so cozy there.

Many an evening the five sisters interlacing their arms would rise above the water together. They had lovely voices, much clearer than any mortal, and when a storm was rising, and they expected ships to be wrecked, they would sing in the most seductive strains of the wonders of the deep, bidding the seafarers have no fear of them. But the sailors could not understand the words, they thought it was the voice of the storm; nor could it be theirs to see this Elysium of the deep, for when the ship sank they were drowned, and only reached the Merman's palace in death. When the elder sisters rose up in this manner, arm-in-arm, in the evening, the youngest remained behind quite alone, looking after them as if she must weep, but mermaids have no tears and so they suffer all the more.

"Oh! if I were only fifteen!" she said, "I know how fond I shall be of the world above, and of the mortals who dwell there."

At last her fifteenth birthday came.

"Now we shall have you off our hands," said her grandmother, the old queen dowager. "Come now, let me adorn you like your other sisters!" and she put a wreath of white lilies round her hair, but every petal of the flowers was half a pearl; then the old queen had eight oysters fixed on to the princess's tail to show her high rank.

"But it hurts so!" said the little mermaid.

"You must endure the pain for the sake of the finery!" said her grandmother.

But oh! how gladly would she have shaken off all this splendour, and laid aside the heavy wreath. Her red flowers in her garden suited her much better, but she did not dare to make any alteration. "Good-bye," she said, and mounted as lightly and airily as a bubble through the water.

The sun had just set when her head rose above the water, but the clouds were still lighted up with a rosy and golden splendour, and the evening star sparkled in the soft pink sky, the air was mild and fresh, and the sea as calm as a millpond. A big three-masted ship lay close by with only a single sail set, for there was not a breath of wind, and the sailors were sitting about the rigging, on the cross-trees, and at the mast-heads. There was music and singing on board, and as the evening closed in, hundreds of gaily coloured lanterns were lighted — they looked like the flags of all nations waving in the air. The little mermaid swam right up to the cabin windows, and every time she was lifted by the swell she could see through the transparent panes crowds of gaily dressed people. The handsomest of them all was the young prince with large dark eyes; he could not be much more than sixteen, and all these festivities were in honour of his birthday. The sailors danced on deck, and when the prince appeared among them hundreds of rockets were let off, making it as light as day, and frightening the little mermaid so much that she had to dive under the water. She soon ventured up again, and it was just as if all the stars of heaven were falling in showers round about her. She had never seen such magic fires. Great suns whirled round, gorgeous fire-fish hung in the blue air, and all was reflected in the calm and glassy sea. It was so light on board the ship that every little rope could be seen, and the people still better. Oh! how handsome the prince was, how he laughed and smiled as he greeted his guests, while the music rang out in the quiet night.

It got quite late, but the little mermaid could not take her eyes off the ship and the beautiful prince. The coloured

lanterns were put out, no more rockets were sent up, and the cannon had ceased its thunder, but deep down in the sea there was a dull murmuring and moaning sound. Meanwhile she was rocked up and down on the waves, so that she could look into the cabin; but the ship got more and more way on, sail after sail was filled by the wind, the waves grew stronger, great clouds gathered, and it lightened in the distance. Oh, there was going to be a fearful storm! and soon the sailors had to shorten sail. The great ship rocked and rolled as she dashed over the angry sea, the black waves rose like mountains, high enough to overwhelm her, but she dived like a swan through them and rose again and again on their towering crests. The little mermaid thought it a most amusing race, but not so the sailors. The ship creaked and groaned, the mighty timbers bulged and bent under the heavy blows, the water broke over the decks, snapping the mainmast like a reed, she heeled over on her side, and the water rushed into the hold.

Now the little mermaid saw that they were in danger and she had for her own sake to beware of the floating beams and wreckage. One moment it was so pitch dark that she could not see at all, but when the lightning flashed it became so light that she could see all on board. Every man was looking out for his own safety as best he could, but she more particularly followed the young prince with her eyes, and when the ship went down she saw him sink in the deep sea. At first she was quite delighted, for now he was coming to be with her, but then she remembered that human beings could not live under water, and that only if he were dead could he go to her father's palace. No! he must not die; so she swam toward him all among the drifting beams and planks, quite forgetting that they might crush her. She dived deep down under the water, and came up again through the waves, and at last reached the young prince just as he was becoming unable to swim any further in the stormy sea. His limbs were numbed, his beautiful eyes were closing, and he must have died if the

little mermaid had not come to the rescue. She held his head above the water and let the waves drive them whithersoever they would.

By daybreak all the storm was over; of the ship not a trace was to be seen; the sun rose from the water in radiant brilliance and his rosy beams seemed to cast a glow of life into the prince's cheeks, but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his fair and lofty brow, and stroked back the dripping hair; it seemed to her that he was like the marble statue in her little garden; she kissed him again and longed that he might live.

At last she saw dry land before her, high blue mountains on whose summits the white snow glistened as if a flock of swans had settled there; down by the shore were beautiful green woods, and in the foreground a church or temple, she did not quite know which, but it was a building of some sort. Lemon and orange trees grew in the garden and lofty palms stood by the gate. At this point the sea formed a little bay where the water was quite calm, but very deep, right up to the cliffs; at their foot was a strip of fine white sand, to which she swam with the beautiful prince, and laid him down on it, taking great care that his head should rest high up in the warm sunshine.

The bells now began to ring in the great white building and a number of young maidens came into the garden. Then the little mermaid swam farther off behind some high rocks and covered her hair and breast with foam, so that no one should see her little face, and then she watched to see who would discover the poor prince.

It was not long before one of the maidens came up to him; at first she seemed quite frightened, but only for a moment, and then she fetched several others, and the mermaid saw that the prince was coming to life, and that he smiled at all those around him, but he never smiled at her—you see he did not know that she had saved him. She felt so sad that when he was led away into the great building she dived sorrow-

fully into the water and made her way home to her father's palace.

Always silent and thoughtful, she became more so now than ever. Her sisters often asked her what she had seen on her first visit to the surface, but she never would tell them anything.

Many an evening and many a morning she would rise to the place where she had left the prince. She saw the fruit in the garden ripen, and then gathered; she saw the snow melt on the mountain-tops, but she never saw the prince, so she always went home still sadder than before. At home her only consolation was to sit in her little garden with her arms twined round the handsome marble statue which reminded her of the prince. It was all in gloomy shade now, as she had ceased to tend her flowers and the garden had become a neglected wilderness of long stalks and leaves entangled with the branches of the tree.

At last she could not bear it any longer, so she told one of her sisters, and from her it soon spread to the others, but to no one else except to one or two other mermaids who only told their dearest friends. One of these knew all about the prince; she had also seen the festivities on the ship; she knew where he came from and where his kingdom was situated.

"Come, little sister!" said the other princesses, and, throwing their arms round each other's shoulders, they rose from the water in a long line, just in front of the prince's palace.

It was built of light yellow glistening stone, with great marble staircases, one of which led into the garden. Magnificent gilded cupolas rose above the roof, and the spaces between the columns which encircled the building were filled with lifelike marble statues. Through the clear glass of the lofty windows you could see gorgeous halls adorned with costly silken hangings, and the pictures on the walls were a sight worth seeing. In the midst of the central hall a large fountain played, throwing its jets of spray upward to a glass dome in

the roof, through which the sunbeams lighted up the water and the beautiful plants which grew in the great basin.

She knew now where he lived and often used to go there in the evenings and by night over the water; she swam much nearer the land than any of the others dared; she even ventured right up the narrow channel under the splendid marble terrace, which threw a long shadow over the water. She used to sit here looking at the young prince, who thought he was quite alone in the clear moonlight.

She saw him many an evening sailing about in his beautiful boat, with flags waving and music playing; she used to peep through the green rushes, and if the wind happened to catch her long silvery veil and any one saw it, they only thought it was a swan flapping its wings.

Many a night she heard the fishermen, who were fishing by torchlight, talking over the good deeds of the young prince; and she was happy to think that she had saved his life when he was drifting about on the waves, half dead, and she could not forget how closely his head had pressed her breast, and how passionately she had kissed him; but he knew nothing of all this, and never saw her even in his dreams.

She became fonder and fonder of mankind, and longed more and more to be able to live among them; their world seemed so infinitely bigger than hers; with their ships they could scour the ocean, they could ascend the mountains high above the clouds, and their wooded, grass-grown lands extended farther than her eye could reach. There was so much that she wanted to know, but her sisters could not give an answer to all her questions, so she asked her old grandmother, who knew the upper world well, and rightly called it the country above the sea.

“If men are not drowned,” asked the little mermaid, “do they live forever? Do they not die as we do down here in the sea?”

“Yes,” said the old lady, “they have to die too, and

their lifetime is even shorter than ours. We may live here for three hundred years, but when we cease to exist, we become mere foam on the water and do not have so much as a grave among our dear ones. We have no immortal souls, we have no future life, we are just like the green sea-weed, which, once cut down, can never revive again! Men, on the other hand, have a soul which lives forever, lives after the body has become dust; it rises through the clear air, up to the shining stars! Just as we rise from the water to see the land of mortals, so they rise up to unknown beautiful regions which we shall never see."

"Why have we no immortal souls?" asked the little mermaid sadly. "I would give all my three hundred years to be a human being for one day, and afterward to have a share in the heavenly kingdom."

"You must not be thinking about that," said the grandmother; "we are much better off and happier than human beings."

"Then I shall have to die and to float as foam on the water, and never hear the music of the waves or see the beautiful flowers or the red sun! Is there nothing I can do to gain an immortal soul?"

"No," said the grandmother, "only if a human being so loved you, that you were more to him than father or mother, if all his thoughts and all his love were so centred in you that he would let the priest join your hands and would vow to be faithful to you here, and to all eternity, then your body would become infused with his soul. Thus and only thus could you gain a share in the felicity of mankind. He would give you a soul while yet keeping his own. But that can never happen! That which is your greatest beauty in the sea, your fish's tail, is thought hideous up on earth, so little do they understand about it; to be pretty there you must have two clumsy supports which they call legs!"

Then the little mermaid sighed and looked sadly at her fish's tail.

“Let us be happy,” said the grandmother; “we will hop and skip during our three hundred years of life—it is surely a long enough time—and after it is over we shall rest all the better in our graves. There is to be a court ball to-night.”

This was a much more splendid affair than we ever see on earth. The walls and the ceiling of the great ballroom were of thick but transparent glass. Several hundreds of colossal mussel shells, rose-red and grass-green, were ranged in order round the sides, holding blue lights, which illuminated the whole room and shone through the walls, so that the sea outside was quite lit up. You could see countless fish, great and small, swimming toward the glass walls, some with shining scales of crimson hue, while others were golden and silvery. In the middle of the room was a broad stream of running water and on this the mermaids and mermen danced to their own beautiful singing. No earthly beings have such lovely voices. The little mermaid sang more sweetly than any of them and they all applauded her. For a moment she felt glad at heart, for she knew that she had the finest voice either in the sea or on land. But she soon began to think again about the upper world; she could not forget the handsome prince and her sorrow in not possessing, like him, an immortal soul. Therefore she stole out of her father’s palace, and while all within was joy and merriment, she sat sadly in her little garden. Suddenly she heard the sound of a horn through the water, and she thought, “now he is out sailing up there; he whom I love more than father or mother, he to whom my thoughts cling and to whose hands I am ready to commit the happiness of my life. I will dare anything to win him and to gain an immortal soul! While my sisters are dancing in my father’s palace, I will go to the sea witch of whom I have always been very much afraid; she will perhaps be able to advise and help me!”

Thereupon the little mermaid left the garden and went toward the roaring whirlpools at the back of which the witch

lived. She had never been that way before; no flowers grew there, no seaweed, only the bare gray sands, stretched toward the whirlpools, which like rushing millwheels swirled round, dragging everything that came within reach down to the depths. She had to pass between these boiling eddies to reach the witches' domain, and for a long way the only path led over warm bubbling mud, which the witch called her "peat bog." Her house stood behind this in the midst of a weird forest. All the trees and bushes were polyps, half animal and half plant; they looked like hundred-headed snakes growing out of the sand, the branches were long slimy arms, with tentacles like wriggling worms, every joint of which from the root to the outermost tip was in constant motion. They wound themselves tightly round whatever they could lay hold of and never let it escape. The little mermaid standing outside was quite frightened, her heart beat fast with terror and she nearly turned back, but then she remembered the prince and the immortal soul of mankind and took courage. She bound her long flowing hair tightly round her head, so that the polyps should not seize her by it, folded her hands over her breast, and darted like a fish through the water, in between the hideous polyps which stretched out their sensitive arms and tentacles toward her. She could see that every one of them had something or other, which they had grasped with their hundred arms, and which they held as if in iron bands. The bleached bones of men who had perished at sea and sunk below peeped forth from the arms of some, while others clutched rudders and sea chests, or the skeleton of some land animal, and, most horrible of all, a little mermaid whom they had caught and suffocated. Then she came to a large opening in the wood where the ground was all slimy, and where some huge fat watersnakes were gambolling about. In the middle of this opening was a house built of the bones of the wrecked; there sat the witch, letting a toad eat out of her mouth, just as mortals let a little canary eat sugar. She called the hideous water-

snakes her little chickens, and allowed them to crawl about on her unsightly bosom.

“I know very well what you have come here for,” said the witch. “It is very foolish of you! all the same you shall have your way, because it will lead you into misfortune, my fine princess. You want to get rid of your fish’s tail, and instead to have two stumps to walk about upon like human beings, so that the young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may win him and an immortal soul.” Saying this, she gave such a loud hideous laugh that the toad and the snakes fell to the ground and wriggled about there.

“You are just in the nick of time,” said the witch; “after sunrise to-morrow I should not be able to help you until another year had run its course. I will make you a potion, and before sunrise you must swim ashore with it, seat yourself on the beach and drink it; then your tail will divide and shrivel up to what men call beautiful legs, but it hurts, it is as if a sharp sword were running through you. All who see you will say that you are the most beautiful child of man they have ever seen. You will keep your gliding gait, no dancer will rival you, but every step you take will be as if you were treading upon sharp knives, so sharp as to draw blood. If you are willing to suffer all this I am ready to help you!”

“Yes!” said the little princess with a trembling voice, thinking of the prince and of winning an undying soul.

“But remember,” said the witch, “when once you have received a human form, you can never be a mermaid again; you will never again be able to dive down through the water to your sisters and to your father’s palace. And if you do not succeed in winning the prince’s love, so that for your sake he will forget father and mother, cleave to you with his whole heart, let the priest join your hands and make you man and wife, you will gain no immortal soul! The first morning after his marriage with another your heart will break, and you will turn into foam of the sea.”

"I will do it," said the little mermaid as pale as death.

"But you will have to pay me, too," said the witch, "and it is no trifle that I demand. You have the most beautiful voice of any at the bottom of the sea, and I daresay that you think you will fascinate him with it, but you must give me that voice. I will have the best you possess in return for my precious potion! I have to mingle my own blood with it so as to make it as sharp as a two-edged sword."

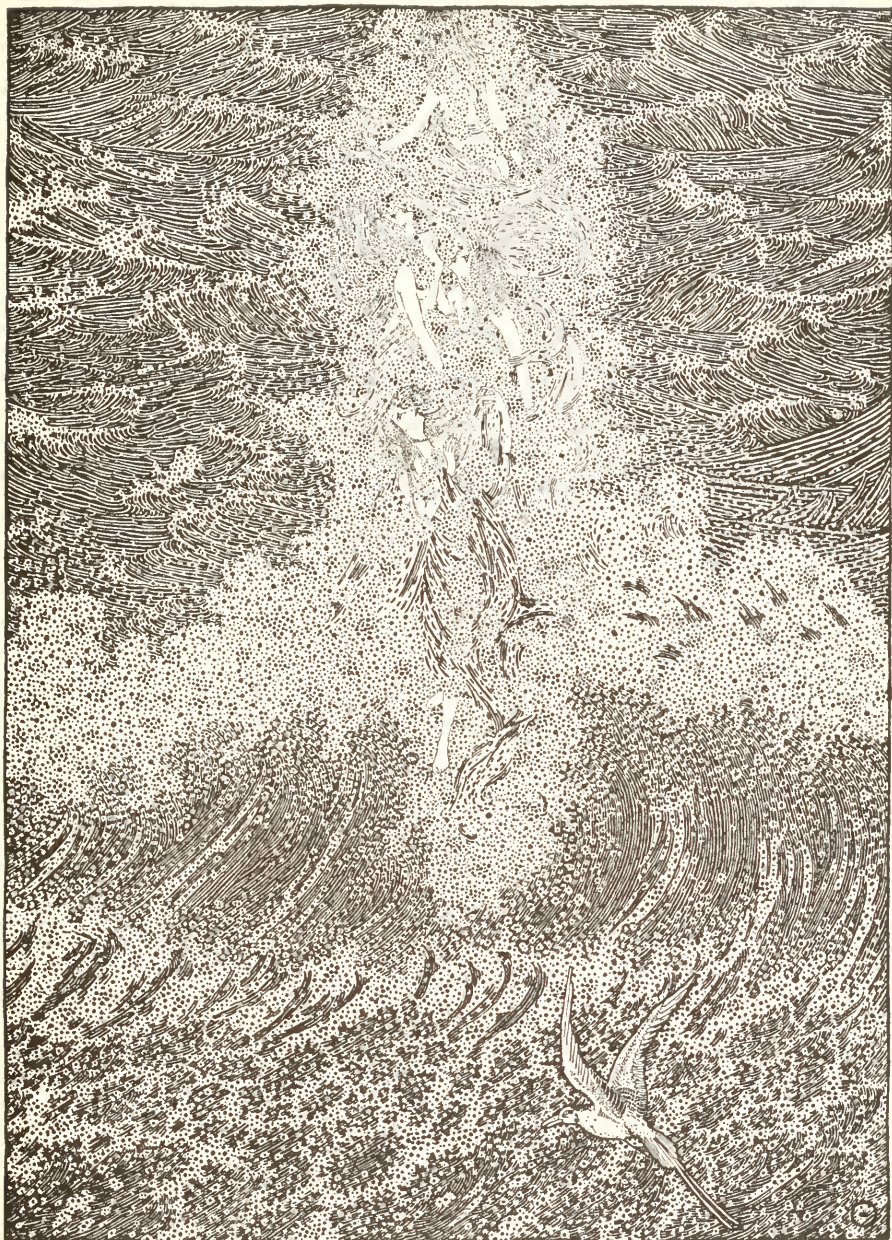
"But if you take my voice," said the little mermaid, "what have I left?"

"Your beautiful form," said the witch, "your gliding gait, and your speaking eyes; with these you ought surely to be able to bewitch a human heart. Well! have you lost courage? Put out your little tongue and I will cut it off in payment for the powerful draught."

"Let it be done," said the little mermaid, and the witch put on her cauldron to brew the magic potion. "There is nothing like cleanliness," said she, as she scoured the pot with a bundle of snakes; then she punctured her breast and let the black blood drop into the cauldron, and the steam took the most weird shapes, enough to frighten any one. Every moment the witch threw new ingredients into the pot, and when it boiled the bubbling was like the sound of crocodiles weeping. At last the potion was ready and it looked like the clearest water.

"There it is," said the witch, and thereupon she cut off the tongue of the little mermaid, who was dumb now and could neither sing nor speak.

"If the polyps should seize you, when you go back through my wood," said the witch, "just drop a single drop of this liquid on them, and their arms and fingers will burst into a thousand pieces." But the little mermaid had no need to do this, for at the mere sight of the bright liquid which sparkled in her hand like a shining star, they drew back in terror. So she soon got past the wood, the bog, and the eddying whirlpools.



Then she saw her sisters rise from the water, they were as pale
as she was

She saw her father's palace, the lights were all out in the great ballroom, and no doubt all the household was asleep, but she did not dare to go in now that she was dumb and about to leave her home forever. She felt as if her heart would break with grief. She stole into the garden and plucked a flower from each of her sister's plots, wafted with her hand countless kisses toward the palace, and then rose up through the dark blue water.

The sun had not risen when she came in sight of the prince's palace and landed at the beautiful marble steps. The moon was shining bright and clear. The little mermaid drank the burning, stinging draught, and it was like a sharp two-edged sword running through her tender frame; she fainted away and lay as if she were dead. When the sun rose on the sea she woke up and became conscious of a sharp pang, but just in front of her stood the handsome young prince, fixing his coal-black eyes on her; she cast hers down and saw that her fish's tail was gone, and that she had the prettiest little white legs any maiden could desire, but she was quite naked, so she wrapped her long thick hair around her. The prince asked who she was and how she came there; she looked at him tenderly and with a sad expression in her dark-blue eyes, but could not speak. Then he took her by the hand and led her into the palace. Every step she took was, as the witch had warned her beforehand, as if she were treading on sharp knives and spikes, but she bore it gladly; led by the prince she moved as lightly as a bubble, and he and every one else marvelled at her graceful gliding gait.

Clothed in the costliest silks and muslins, she was the greatest beauty in the palace, but she was dumb and could neither sing nor speak. Beautiful slaves clad in silks and gold came forward and sang to the prince and his royal parents; one of them sang better than all the others, and the prince clapped his hands and smiled at her; that made the little mermaid very sad, for she knew that she used to sing far better

herself. She thought "Oh! if he only knew that for the sake of being with him I had given up my voice forever!" Now the slaves began to dance graceful undulating dances to enchanting music; thereupon the little mermaid, lifting her beautiful white arms and raising herself on tiptoe, glided on the floor with a grace which none of the other dancers had yet attained. With every motion her grace and beauty became more apparent, and her eyes appealed more deeply to the heart than the songs of the slaves. Every one was delighted with it, especially the prince, who called her his little foundling, and she danced on and on, notwithstanding that every time her foot touched the ground it was like treading on sharp knives. The prince said that she should always be near him, and she was allowed to sleep outside his door on a velvet cushion.

He had a man's dress made for her, so that she could ride about with him. They used to ride through scented woods, where the green branches brushed her shoulders, and little birds sang among the fresh leaves. She climbed up the highest mountains with the prince, and although her delicate feet bled so that others saw it, she only laughed and followed him until they saw the clouds sailing below them like a flock of birds, taking flight to distant lands.

At home in the prince's palace, when at night the others were asleep, she used to go out on to the marble steps; it cooled her burning feet to stand in the cold sea water, and at such times she used to think of those she had left in the deep.

One night her sisters came arm in arm; they sang so sorrowfully as they swam on the water that she beckoned to them and they recognized her, and told her how she had grieved them all. After that they visited her every night, and one night she saw, a long way out, her old grandmother (who for many years had not been above the water), and the Merman King with his crown on his head; they stretched out their hands toward her, but did not venture so close to land as her sisters.

Day by day she became dearer to the prince; he loved her as one loves a good, sweet child, but it never entered his head to make her his queen; yet, unless she became his wife she would never win an everlasting soul, but on his wedding morning would turn to sea foam.

“Am I not dearer to you than any of them?” the little mermaid’s eyes seemed to say when he took her in his arms and kissed her beautiful brow.

“Yes, you are the dearest one to me,” said the prince, “for you have the best heart of them all, and you are fondest of me; you are also like a young girl I once saw, but whom I never expect to see again. I was on board a ship which was wrecked; I was driven on shore by the waves close to a holy Temple where several young girls were ministering at a service; the youngest of them found me on the beach and saved my life; I saw her but twice. She was the only person I could love in this world, but you are like her, you almost drive her image out of my heart. She belongs to the holy Temple, and therefore by good fortune you have been sent to me; we will never part!”

“Alas! he does not know that it was I who saved his life,” thought the little mermaid. “I bore him over the sea to the wood, where the Temple stands. I sat behind the foam and watched to see if any one would come. I saw the pretty girl he loves better than me.” And the mermaid heaved a bitter sigh, for she could not weep.

“The girl belongs to the holy Temple, he has said; she will never return to the world; they will never meet again; I am here with him; I see him every day. Yes! I will tend him, love him, and give up my life to him.”

But now the rumour ran that the prince was to be married to the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring king, and for that reason was fitting out a splendid ship. It was given out that the prince was going on a voyage to see the adjoining countries, but it was without doubt to see the king’s daughter; he was to have a great suite with him, but the little mermaid

shook her head and laughed; she knew the prince's intentions much better than any of the others. "I must take this voyage," he had said to her; "I must go and see the beautiful princess; my parents demand that, but they will never force me to bring her home as my bride; I can never love her! She will not be like the lovely girl in the Temple whom you resemble. If ever I had to choose a bride it would sooner be you with your speaking eyes, my sweet, dumb foundling!" And he kissed her rosy mouth, played with her long hair, and laid his head upon her heart, which already dreamt of human joys and an immortal soul.

"You are not frightened of the sea, I suppose, my dumb child?" he said, as they stood on the proud ship which was to carry them to the country of the neighbouring king; and he told her about storms and calms, about curious fish in the deep, and the marvels seen by divers; and she smiled at his tales, for she knew all about the bottom of the sea much better than any one else.

At night, in the moonlight, when all were asleep, except the steersman who stood at the helm, she sat at the side of the ship trying to pierce the clear water with her eyes, and fancied she saw her father's palace, and above it her old grandmother with her silver crown on her head, looking up through the cross currents toward the keel of the ship. Then her sisters rose above the water; they gazed sadly at her, wringing their white hands; she beckoned to them, smiled, and was about to tell them that all was going well and happily with her, when the cabin boy approached, and the sisters dived down, but he supposed that the white objects he had seen were nothing but flakes of foam.

The next morning the ship entered the harbour of the neighbouring king's magnificent city. The church bells rang and trumpets were sounded from every lofty tower, while the soldiers paraded with flags flying and glittering bayonets. There was a *fête* every day; there was a succession of balls,

and receptions followed one after the other, but the princess was not yet present; she was being brought up a long way off, in a holy Temple they said, and was learning all the royal virtues. At last she came. The little mermaid stood eager to see her beauty, and she was obliged to confess that a lovelier creature she had never beheld. Her complexion was exquisitely pure and delicate, and her trustful eyes of the deepest blue shone through their dark lashes.

"It is you," said the prince, "you who saved me when I lay almost lifeless on the beach?" and he clasped his blushing bride to his heart. "Oh, I am too happy!" he exclaimed to the little mermaid.

"A greater joy than I had dared to hope for has come to pass. You will rejoice at my joy, for you love me better than any one." Then the little mermaid kissed his hand, and felt as if her heart were broken already.

His wedding morn would bring death to her and change her to foam.

All the church bells pealed and heralds rode through the town proclaiming the nuptials. Upon every altar throughout the land fragrant oil was burnt in costly silver lamps. Amidst the swinging of censers by the priests, the bride and bridegroom joined hands and received the bishop's blessing. The little mermaid dressed in silk and gold stood holding the bride's train, but her ears were deaf to the festal strains, her eyes saw nothing of the sacred ceremony, she was thinking of her coming death and of all that she had lost in this world.

That same evening the bride and bridegroom embarked, amidst the roar of cannon and the waving of banners. A royal tent of purple and gold softly cushioned was raised amidships, where the bridal pair were to repose during the calm cool night.

The sails swelled in the wind and the ship skimmed lightly and almost without motion over the transparent sea.

At dusk lanterns of many colours were lighted and the sailors danced merrily on deck. The little mermaid could

not help thinking of the first time she came up from the sea and saw the same splendour and gaiety; and she now threw herself among the dancers, whirling, as a swallow skims through the air when pursued. The onlookers cheered her in amazement; never had she danced so divinely; her delicate feet pained her as if they were cut with knives, but she did not feel it, for the pain at her heart was much sharper. She knew that it was the last night that she would breathe the same air as he, and would look upon the mighty deep, and the blue starry heavens; an endless night without thought and without dreams awaited her, who neither had a soul, nor could win one. The joy and revelry on board lasted till long past midnight; she went on laughing and dancing with the thought of death all the time in her heart. The prince caressed his lovely bride and she played with his raven locks, and with their arms entwined they retired to the gorgeous tent. All became hushed and still on board the ship, only the steersman stood at the helm, the little mermaid laid her white arms on the gunwale and looked eastward for the pink-tinted dawn; the first sunbeam, she knew, would be her death. Then she saw her sisters rise from the water, they were as pale as she was, their beautiful long hair no longer floated on the breeze, for it had been cut off.

“We have given it to the witch to obtain her help, so that you may not die to-night! she has given us a knife, here it is, look how sharp it is! Before the sun rises, you must plunge it into the prince's heart, and when his warm blood sprinkles your feet they will join together and grow into a tail, and you will once more be a mermaid; you will be able to come down into the water to us, and to live out your three hundred years before you are turned into dead, salt sea foam. Make haste! you or he must die before sunrise! Our old grandmother is so full of grief that her white hair has fallen off as ours fell under the witch's scissors. Slay the prince and come back to us! Quick! Quick! do you not see the rosy streak in the sky? In a few moments the sun will rise and then you

must die!" saying this they heaved a wondrous deep sigh and sank among the waves.

The little mermaid drew aside the purple curtain from the tent and looked at the beautiful bride asleep with her head on the prince's breast; she bent over him and kissed his fair brow, looked at the sky where the dawn was spreading fast; looked at the sharp knife, and again fixed her eyes on the prince who, in his dream, called his bride by name, yes! she alone was in his thoughts! — For a moment the knife quivered in her grasp, then she threw it far out among the waves now rosy in the morning light, and where it fell the water bubbled up like drops of blood.

Once more she looked at the prince, with her eyes already dimmed by death, then dashed overboard and fell, her body dissolving into foam.

Now the sun rose from the sea and with its kindly beams warmed the deadly cold foam, so that the little mermaid did not feel the chill of death. She saw the bright sun and above her floated hundreds of beauteous ethereal beings through which she could see the white ship and the rosy heavens; their voices were melodious but so spirit-like that no human ear could hear them, any more than an earthly eye could see their forms. Light as bubbles they floated through the air without the aid of wings. The little mermaid perceived that she had a form like theirs; it gradually took shape out of the foam. "To whom am I coming?" said she, and her voice sounded like that of the other beings, so unearthly in its beauty that no music of ours could reproduce it.

"To the daughters of the air!" answered the others; "a mermaid has no undying soul, and can never gain one without winning the love of a human being. Her eternal life must depend upon an unknown power. Nor have the daughters of the air an everlasting soul, but by their own good deeds they may create one for themselves. We fly to the tropics where mankind is the victim of hot and pestilent winds, there

we bring cooling breezes. We diffuse the scent of flowers all around, and bring refreshment and healing in our train. When for three hundred years we have laboured to do all the good in our power, we gain an undying soul and take a part in the everlasting joys of mankind. You, poor little mermaid, have with your whole heart struggled for the same thing as we have struggled for. You have suffered and endured, raised yourself to the spirit world of the air; and now by your own good deeds you may, in the course of three hundred years, work out for yourself an undying soul."

Then the little mermaid lifted her transparent arms toward God's sun, and for the first time shed tears.

On board ship all was again life and bustle; she saw the prince with his lovely bride searching for her; they looked sadly at the bubbling foam, as if they knew that she had thrown herself into the waves. Unseen she kissed the bride on her brow, smiled at the prince and rose aloft with the other spirits of the air to the rosy clouds which sailed above.

"In three hundred years we shall thus float into Paradise."

"We might reach it sooner," whispered one. "Unseen we flit into those homes of men where there are children, and for every day that we find a good child who gives pleasure to its parents and deserves their love, God shortens our time of probation. The child does not know when we fly through the room, and when we smile with pleasure at it one year of our three hundred is taken away. But if we see a naughty or badly disposed child, we cannot help shedding tears of sorrow, and every tear adds a day to the time of our probation."





THERE was once a merchant who was so rich that he might have paved the whole street, and a little alley besides, with silver money. But he didn't do it—he knew better how to use his money than that: if he laid out a penny, he got half a crown in return, such a clever man of business was he — and then he died.

His son got all the money, and he led a merry life; he used to go to masquerades every night, made kites of bank notes, and played ducks and drakes with gold coins instead of stones. In this way the money soon went. At last he had only a penny left, and no clothes except an old dressing-gown and a pair of slippers. His friends cared for him no longer; they couldn't walk about the streets with him; but one of them who was kind sent him an old trunk, and said, "Pack up." Now this was all very well, but he had nothing to pack, so he got into the trunk himself.

It was a most peculiar trunk. If you pressed the lock the trunk could fly; and this is what happened: with a whiz

it flew up the chimney, high above the clouds, further and further away. The bottom of it cracked ominously, and he was dreadfully afraid it would go to pieces, and a nice fall he would have had! Heaven preserve us! At last he arrived in the country of the Turks. He hid the trunk in a wood under the dead leaves, and walked into the town; he could easily do that, as all the Turks wear dressing-gowns and slippers, you know, just like his. He met a nurse with a baby. "I say, you Turkish nurse," said he, "what is that big palace close to the town, where all the windows are so high up?"

"That's where the king's daughter lives," said she; "it has been prophesied that she will be made very unhappy by a lover, so no one is allowed to visit her except when the king and the queen go with them."

"Thank you," said the merchant's son, and then he went back to the wood and got into his trunk again, and flew on to the roof of the palace, from whence he crept in at the princess's window.

She was lying on a sofa, fast asleep. She was so very beautiful that the merchant's son was driven to kiss her. She woke up and was dreadfully frightened, but he said that he was the Prophet of the Turks and he had flown down through the air to see her, and this pleased her very much.

They sat side by side and he told her stories about her eyes; he said they were like the most beautiful deep, dark lakes, in which her thoughts floated like mermaids; and then he told her about her forehead, that it was like a snow mountain, adorned with a series of pictures. And he told her all about the storks, which bring beautiful little children up out of the rivers. No end of beautiful stories he told her, and then he asked her to marry him, and she at once said "Yes." "But you must come here on Saturday," she said, "when the King and the Queen drink tea with me. They will be very proud when they hear I am to marry a prophet; but mind you have a splendid story to tell them, for my parents are very fond of



And he told her all about the storks, which bring beautiful children up out of the river

stories: my mother likes them to be grand and very proper, but my father likes them to be merry, so that he can laugh at them."

"Well, a story will be my only wedding-gift!" he said, and then they separated: but the princess gave him a sword encrusted with gold. It was the kind of present he needed badly.

He flew away and bought himself a new dressing-gown, and sat down in the wood to make up a new story; it had to be ready by Saturday, and it is not always so easy to make up a story.

However, he had it ready in time, and Saturday came.

The king, the queen and the whole court were waiting for him round the princess's tea-table. He had a charming reception.

"Now will you tell us a story," said the Queen, "one which is both thoughtful and instructive."

"But one that we can laugh at too," said the King.

"All right!" said he, and then he began. We must listen to his story attentively.

"There was once a bundle of matches, and they were frightfully proud because of their high origin. Their family tree, that is to say the great pine tree of which they were each a little splinter, had been the giant of the forest. The matches now lay on a shelf between a tinderbox and an old iron pot, and they told the whole story of their youth to these two. 'Ah, when we were a living tree,' said they, 'we were indeed a green branch! Every morning and every evening we had diamond-tea, that was the dew-drops. In the day we had the sunshine, and all the little birds to tell us stories. We could see, too, that we were very rich, for most of the other trees were only clad in summer, but our family could afford to have green clothes both summer and winter. But then the wood-cutters came, and there was a great revolution, and our family was sundered. The head of the tribe got a place

as mainmast on a splendid ship, which could sail round the world if it chose; the other branches were scattered in different directions, and it is now our task to give light to the common herd; that is how such aristocratic people as ourselves have got into this kitchen.'

"'Now my lot has been different!' said the iron pot, beside which the matches lay. 'Ever since I came into the world I have passed the time in being scoured and boiled, over and over again! Everything solid comes to me, and in fact I am the most important person in the house. My pleasure is, when the dinner is over, to lie clean and bright on the shelf, and to have a sensible chat with my companions; but with the exception of the water-bucket, which sometimes goes down into the yard, we lead an indoor life. Our only newsmonger is the market-basket, and it talks very wildly about the Government and the People. Why, the other day an old pot was so alarmed by the conversation, that it fell down and broke itself to pieces! It was a Liberal, you see!'

"'You are talking too much,' said the tinderbox, and the steel struck sparks on the flint. 'Let us have a merry evening.'

"'Yes, pray let us settle which is the most aristocratic among us,' said the matches.

"'No, I don't like talking about myself,' said the earthen pipkin; 'let us have an evening entertainment! I will begin. I will tell you the kind of things we have all experienced; they are quite easy to understand, and that is what we all like: By the eastern sea and Danish beeches ——'

"'That's a nice beginning to make!' said all the plates; 'I am sure that will be a story I shall like!'

"'Well, I passed my youth there, in a very quiet family; the furniture was beeswaxed, the floors washed, and clean curtains were put up once a fortnight!'

"'What a good story-teller you are,' said the broom; 'one can tell directly that it's a woman telling a story; a vein of cleanliness runs through it!'



“I saw the prophet myself . . . his eyes were like shining stars,
and his beard like foaming water”

“‘Yes, one feels that,’ said the water-pail, and for very joy it gave a little hop which clashed on the floor.

“The pipkin went on with its story, and the end was much the same as the beginning.

“All the plates clattered with joy, and the broom crowned the pipkin with a wreath of parsley, because it knew it would annoy the others; and it thought, ‘If I crown her to-day, she will crown me to-morrow.’

“‘Now I will dance,’ said the tongs, and began to dance; heaven help us, what a way into the air she could get her leg. The old chair-cover in the corner burst when she saw it! ‘Mayn’t I be crowned too?’ said the tongs, so they crowned her.

“‘They’re only a rabble after all,’ said the matches.

“The tea-urn was called upon to sing now, but it had a cold, it said; it couldn’t sing except when it was boiling; but that was all because it was stuck-up; it *wouldn’t* sing except when it was on the drawing-room table.

“There was an old quill pen, along on the window-sill, which the servant used to write with; there was nothing extraordinary about it, except that it had been dipped too far into the inkpot, but it was rather proud of that. ‘If the tea-urn won’t sing, it can leave it alone,’ it said. ‘There is a night-ingale hanging outside in a cage, it can sing; it certainly hasn’t learnt anything special, but we needn’t mind that to-night.’

“‘I think it is most unsuitable,’ said the kettle, which was the kitchen songster, and half-sister of the urn, ‘that a strange bird like that should be listened to! Is it patriotic? I will let the market-basket judge.’

“‘I am very much annoyed,’ said the market-basket. ‘I am more annoyed than any one can tell! Is this a suitable way to spend an evening? Wouldn’t it be better to put the house to rights? Then everything would find its proper place, and I would manage the whole party. Then we should get on differently!’

“‘Yes, let us make a row!’ they all said together.

“At that moment the door opened, it was the servant, and they all stood still, nobody uttered a sound. But not a pot among them which didn't know its capabilities, or how distinguished it was, ‘If *I* had chosen, we might have had a merry evening, and no mistake,’ they all thought.

“The servant took the matches and struck a light; preserve us! how they spluttered and blazed up.

“‘Now every one can see,’ they thought, ‘that we are the first. How brilliantly we shine! What a light we shed around!’ — And then they were burnt out.”

“That was a splendid story,” said the Queen; “I quite felt that I was in the kitchen with the matches. Yes, indeed, you shall marry our daughter.”

“Certainly!” said the King. “Thou shalt marry her on Monday!” They said “*du*” (thou) to him now, as they were to be related.

So the wedding was decided upon, and the evening before the town was illuminated. Buns and cakes were scattered broadcast; the street boys stood on tiptoe and shouted hurrah, and whistled through their fingers. Everything was most gorgeous.

“I suppose I shall have to do something, too,” said the merchant's son; so he bought a lot of rockets, squibs, and all sorts of fireworks, put them in his trunk, and flew up into the air with them.

All the Turks jumped at the sight, so that their slippers flew up into the air; they had never seen a flight of meteors like that before. They saw now without doubt that it was the prophet himself, who was about to marry the princess.

As soon as the merchant's son got down again into the wood with his trunk, he thought, “I will just go into the town to hear what was thought of the display,” and it was quite reasonable that he should do so.

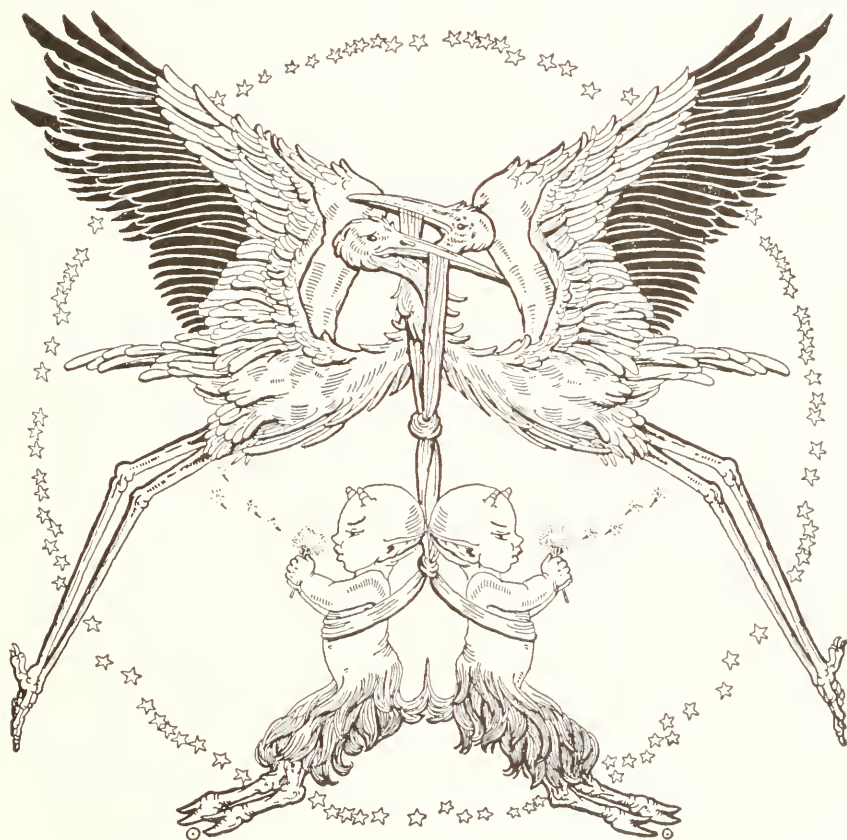
Oh, how every one talked! Every single man he spoke to had his own opinion about it, but that it had been splendid was the universal opinion.



She stood all day on the roof waiting for him; she is waiting for him still, but he wanders around the world telling stories

“I saw the prophet myself,” said one; “his eyes were like shining stars, and his beard like foaming water.”

“He was wrapped in a mantle of fire,” said another. “The most beautiful angels’ heads peeped out among the folds.” He heard nothing but pleasant things, and the next day was to be his wedding day. He went back to the wood to get into his trunk — but where was it? The trunk was burnt up. A spark from the fireworks had set fire to it and the trunk was burnt to ashes. He could not fly any more, or reach his bride. She stood all day on the roof waiting for him; she is waiting for him still, but he wanders round the world telling stories, only they are no longer so merry as the one he told about the matches.





THERE was once a little girl; she was a tiny, delicate little thing, but she always had to go about barefoot in the summer, because she was very poor. In winter she only had a pair of heavy wooden shoes, and her ankles were terribly chafed.

An old mother shoemaker lived in the middle of the village, and she made a pair of little shoes out of some strips of red cloth. They were very clumsy, but they were made with the best intention, for the little girl was to have them. Her name was Karen.

These shoes were given to her, and she wore them for the first time on the day her mother was buried; they were certainly not mourning, but she had no others, and so she walked bare-legged in them behind the poor deal coffin.

Just then a big old carriage drove by, and a big old lady was seated in it; she looked at the little girl, and felt very, very sorry for her, and said to the parson, "Give the little girl to me and I will look after her and be kind to her." Karen



She wanted to sit down on a pauper's grave where the bitter
wormwood grew

thought it was all because of the red shoes, but the old lady said they were hideous, and they were burnt. Karen was well and neatly dressed, and had to learn reading and sewing. People said she was pretty, but her mirror said, "You are more than pretty, you are lovely."

At this time the Queen was taking a journey through the country, and she had her little daughter the Princess with her. The people, and among them Karen, crowded round the palace where they were staying, to see them. The little Princess stood at a window to show herself. She wore neither a train nor a golden crown, but she was dressed all in white with a beautiful pair of red morocco shoes. They were indeed a contrast to those the poor old mother shoemaker had made for Karen. Nothing in the world could be compared to these red shoes.

The time came when Karen was old enough to be confirmed; she had new clothes, and she was also to have a pair of new shoes. The rich shoemaker in the town was to take the measure of her little foot; his shop was full of glass cases of the most charming shoes and shiny leather boots. They looked beautiful, but the old lady could not see very well, so it gave her no pleasure to look at them. Among all the other shoes there was one pair of red shoes like those worn by the Princess; oh, how pretty they were. The shoemaker told them that they had been made for an earl's daughter, but they had not fitted. "I suppose they are patent leather," said the old lady, "they are so shiny."

"Yes, they do shine," said Karen, who tried them on. They fitted and were bought; but the old lady had not the least idea that they were red, or she would never have allowed Karen to wear them for her Confirmation. This she did, however.

Everybody looked at her feet, and when she walked up the church to the chancel, she thought that even the old pictures, those portraits of dead and gone priests and their wives, with stiff collars and long black clothes, fixed their eyes upon her

shoes. She thought of nothing else when the priest laid his hand upon her head and spoke to her of holy baptism, the covenant with God, and that from henceforth she was to be a responsible Christian person. The solemn notes of the organ resounded, the children sang with their sweet voices, the old precentor sang, but Karen only thought about her red shoes.

By the afternoon the old lady had been told on all sides that the shoes were red, and she said it was very naughty and most improper. For the future whenever Karen went to the church, she was to wear black shoes, even if they were old. Next Sunday there was Holy Communion, and Karen was to receive it for the first time. She looked at the black shoes and then at the red ones — then she looked again at the red, and at last put them on.

It was beautiful, sunny weather; Karen and the old lady went by the path through the cornfield, and it was rather dusty. By the church door stood an old soldier, with a crutch; he had a curious long beard, it was more red than white, in fact it was almost quite red. He bent down to the ground and asked the old lady if he might dust her shoes. Karen put out her little foot too. "See what beautiful dancing shoes!" said the soldier. "Mind you stick fast when you dance," and as he spoke he struck the soles with his hand. The old lady gave the soldier a copper and went into the church with Karen. All the people in the church looked at Karen's red shoes, and all the portraits looked too. When Karen knelt at the altar rails and the chalice was put to her lips, she only thought of the red shoes; she seemed to see them floating before her eyes. She forgot to join in the hymn of praise, and she forgot to say the Lord's Prayer.

Now everybody left the church, and the old lady got into her carriage. Karen lifted her foot to get in after her, but just then the old soldier, who was still standing there, said, "See what pretty dancing shoes!" Karen couldn't help it; she took a few dancing steps, and when she began her feet



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“You can’t know who I am? I chop the bad people’s heads off,
and I see that my axe is quivering”

continued to dance; it was just as if the shoes had a power over them. She danced right round the church; she couldn't stop; the coachman had to run after her and take hold of her, and lift her into the carriage; but her feet continued to dance so that she kicked the poor lady horribly. At last they got the shoes off, and her feet had a little rest.

When they got home the shoes were put away in a cupboard, but Karen could not help going to look at them.

The old lady became very ill; they said she could not live; she had to be carefully nursed and tended, and no one was nearer than Karen to do this. But there was to be a grand ball in the town and Karen was invited. She looked at the old lady, who after all could not live; she looked at the red shoes; she thought there was no harm in doing so. She put on the red shoes, even that she might do; but then she went to the ball and began to dance! The shoes would not let her do what she liked: when she wanted to go to the right, they danced to the left; when she wanted to dance up the room, the shoes danced down the room, then down the stairs, through the streets and out of the town gate. Away she danced, and away she had to dance, right away into the dark forest. Something shone up above the trees and she thought it was the moon, for it was a face; but it was the old soldier with the red beard, and he nodded and said, "See what pretty dancing shoes!"

This frightened her terribly and she wanted to throw off the red shoes, but they stuck fast. She tore off her stockings, but the shoes had grown fast to her feet, and off she danced, and off she had to dance over fields and meadows, in rain and sunshine, by day and by night, but at night it was fearful.

She danced into the open churchyard, but the dead did not join her dance, they had something much better to do. She wanted to sit down on a pauper's grave where the bitter wormwood grew, but there was no rest nor repose for her. When she danced toward the open church door she saw an angel standing there in long white robes and wings which

reached from his shoulders to the ground; his face was grave and stern, and in his hand he held a broad and shining sword.

“Dance you shall!” said he; “you shall dance in your red shoes till you are pale and cold; till your skin shrivels up and you are a skeleton! You shall dance from door to door, and wherever you find proud, vain children, you must knock at the door so that they may see you and fear you. Yea, you shall dance ——”

“Mercy!” shrieked Karen, but she did not hear the angel’s answer, for the shoes bore her through the gate into the fields, over roadways and paths, ever and ever she was forced to dance.

One morning she danced past a door she knew well; she heard the sound of a hymn from within, and a coffin covered with flowers was being carried out. Then she knew that the old lady was dead, and it seemed to her that she was forsaken by all the world, and cursed by the holy angels of God.

On and ever on she danced; dance she must even through the dark nights. The shoes bore her away over briars and stubble till her feet were torn and bleeding; she danced away over the heath till she came to a little lonely house. She knew the executioner lived here, and she tapped with her fingers on the window pane and said:

“Come out! come out! I can’t come in, for I am dancing!”

The executioner said, “You can’t know who I am? I chop the bad people’s heads off, and I see that my axe is quivering.”

“Don’t chop my head off,” said Karen, “for then I can never repent of my sins, but pray, pray chop my feet off with the red shoes!”

Then she confessed all her sins, and the executioner chopped off her feet with the red shoes, but the shoes danced right away with the little feet into the depths of the forest.

Then he made her a pair of wooden legs and crutches, and he taught her a psalm, the one penitents always sing; and she kissed the hand which had wielded the axe, and went away over the heath.



Her soul flew with the sunshine to heaven and no one there asked
about the red shoes

“I have suffered enough for those red shoes!” said she. “I will go to church now, so that they may see me!” and she went as fast as she could to the church door. When she got there, the red shoes danced up in front of her, and she was frightened and went home again.

She was very sad all the week, and shed many bitter tears, but when Sunday came she said, ‘Now, then, I have suffered and struggled long enough; I should think I am quite as good as many who sit holding their heads so high in church!’ She went along quite boldly, but she did not get farther than the gate before she saw the red shoes dancing in front of her; she was more frightened than ever, and turned back, this time with real repentance in her heart. Then she went to the parson’s house, and begged to be taken into service; she would be very industrious and work as hard as she could; she didn’t care what wages they gave her, if only she might have a roof over her head and live among kind people. The parson’s wife was sorry for her, and took her into her service; she proved to be very industrious and thoughtful. She sat very still, and listened most attentively in the evening when the parson read the Bible. All the little ones were very fond of her, but when they chattered about finery and dress, and about being as beautiful as a queen, she would shake her head.

Next Sunday they all went to church, and they asked her if she would go with them; but she looked sadly, with tears in her eyes, at her crutches, and they went without her to hear the word of God, and she sat in her little room alone. It was only big enough for a bed and a chair; she sat there with her prayer book in her hand, and as she read it with a humble mind, she heard the notes of the organ, borne from the church by the wind; she raised her tear-stained face and said, “O God! help me!”

Then the sun shone brightly round her, and the angel in the white robes whom she had seen on yonder night, at the church door, stood before her. He no longer held the sharp

sword in his hand, but a beautiful green branch, covered with roses. He touched the ceiling with it and it rose to a great height, and wherever he touched it a golden star appeared. Then he touched the walls and they spread themselves out, and she saw and heard the organ. She saw the pictures of the old parsons and their wives; the congregation were all sitting in their seats singing aloud — for the church itself had come home to the poor girl, in her narrow little chamber, or else she had been taken to it. She found herself on the bench with the other people from the parsonage. And when the hymn had come to an end they looked up and nodded to her and said, "It was a good thing you came after all, little Karen!"

"It was through God's mercy!" she said. The organ sounded, and the children's voices echoed so sweetly through the choir. The warm sunshine streamed brightly in through the window, right up to the bench where Karen sat; her heart was so over-filled with the sunshine, with peace and with joy that it broke. Her soul flew with the sunshine to heaven and no one there asked about the red shoes.





THERE was once a woman who had the greatest longing for a little tiny child, but she had no idea where to get one; so she went to an old witch and said to her, "I do so long to have a little child, will you tell me where I can get one?"

"Oh, we shall be able to manage that," said the witch. "Here is a barley corn for you; it is not at all the same kind as that which grows in the peasant's field, or with which chickens are fed; plant it in a flower pot and you will see what will appear."

"Thank you, oh, thank you!" said the woman, and she gave the witch twelve pennies, then went home and planted the barley corn, and a large, handsome flower sprang up at once; it looked exactly like a tulip, but the petals were tightly shut up, just as if they were still in bud. "That is a lovely flower," said the woman, and she kissed the pretty red and yellow petals; as she kissed it the flower burst open with a loud snap. It was a real tulip, you could see that; but right in the middle of the flower on the green stool sat a little tiny

girl, most lovely and delicate; she was not more than an inch in height, so she was called Thumbelisa.

Her cradle was a smartly varnished walnut shell, with the blue petals of violets for a mattress and a rose-leaf to cover her; she slept in it at night, but during the day she played about on the table where the woman had placed a plate, surrounded by a wreath of flowers on the outer edge with their stalks in water. A large tulip petal floated on the water and on this little Thumbelisa sat and sailed about from one side of the plate to the other; she had two white horsehairs for oars. It was a pretty sight. She could sing, too, with such delicacy and charm as was never heard before.

One night as she lay in her pretty bed, a great ugly toad hopped in at the window, for there was a broken pane. Ugh! how hideous that great wet toad was; it hopped right down on to the table where Thumbelisa lay fast asleep, under the red rose-leaf.

"Here is a lovely wife for my son," said the toad, and then she took up the walnut shell where Thumbelisa slept and hopped away with it through the window, down into the garden. A great broad stream ran through it, but just at the edge it was swampy and muddy, and it was here that the toad lived with her son. Ugh! how ugly and hideous he was too, exactly like his mother. "Koax, koax, brekke-ke-kex," that was all he had to say when he saw the lovely little girl in the walnut shell.

"Do not talk so loud or you will wake her," said the old toad; "she might escape us yet, for she is as light as thistle-down! We will put her on one of the broad water-lily leaves out in the stream; it will be just like an island to her, she is so small and light. She won't be able to run away from there while we get the stateroom ready down under the mud, which you are to inhabit."

A great many water lilies grew in the stream, their broad green leaves looked as if they were floating on the surface of

the water. The leaf which was farthest from the shore was also the biggest and to this one the old toad swam out with the walnut shell in which little Thumbelisa lay.

The poor, tiny little creature woke up quite early in the morning, and when she saw where she was she began to cry most bitterly, for there was water on every side of the big green leaf, and she could not reach the land at any point.

The old toad sat in the mud decking out her abode with grasses and the buds of the yellow water lilies, so as to have it very nice for the new daughter-in-law, and then she swam out with her ugly son to the leaf where Thumbelisa stood; they wanted to fetch her pretty bed to place it in the bridal chamber before they took her there. The old toad made a deep curtsy in the water before her, and said, "Here is my son, who is to be your husband, and you are to live together most comfortably down in the mud."

"Koax, koax, brekke-ke-kex," that was all the son could say.

Then they took the pretty little bed and swam away with it, but Thumbelisa sat quite alone on the green leaf and cried because she did not want to live with the ugly toad, or have her horrid son for a husband. The little fish which swam about in the water had no doubt seen the toad and heard what she said, so they stuck their heads up, wishing, I suppose, to see the little girl. As soon as they saw her, they were delighted with her, and were quite grieved to think that she was to go down to live with the ugly toad. No, that should never happen. They flocked together down in the water round about the green stem which held the leaf she stood upon, and gnawed at it with their teeth till it floated away down the stream carrying Thumbelisa away where the toad could not follow her.

Thumbelisa sailed past place after place, and the little birds in the bushes saw her and sang, "what a lovely little maid." The leaf with her on it floated farther and farther away and in this manner reached foreign lands.

A pretty little white butterfly fluttered round and round her for some time and at last settled on the leaf, for it had taken quite a fancy to Thumbelisa: she was so happy now, because the toad could not reach her and she was sailing through such lovely scenes; the sun shone on the water and it looked like liquid gold. Then she took her sash and tied one end round the butterfly, and the other she made fast to the leaf which went gliding on quicker and quicker, and she with it, for she was standing on the leaf.

At this moment a big cockchafer came flying along; he caught sight of her and in an instant he fixed his claw round her slender waist and flew off with her up into a tree, but the green leaf floated down the stream and the butterfly with it, for he was tied to it and could not get loose.

Heavens! how frightened poor little Thumbelisa was when the cockchafer carried her up into the tree, but she was most of all grieved about the pretty white butterfly which she had fastened to the leaf; if he could not succeed in getting loose he would be starved to death.

But the cockchafer cared nothing for that. He settled with her on the largest leaf on the tree, and fed her with honey from the flowers, and he said that she was lovely although she was not a bit like a chafer. Presently all the other chafers which lived in the tree came to visit them; they looked at Thumbelisa and the young lady chafers twitched their feelers and said, "She has also got two legs, what a good effect it has." "She has no feelers," said another. "She is so slender in the waist, fie, she looks like a human being." "How ugly she is," said all the mother chafers, and yet little Thumbelisa was so pretty. That was certainly also the opinion of the cockchafer who had captured her, but when all the others said she was ugly, he at last began to believe it, too, and would not have anything more to do with her, she might go wherever she liked! They flew down from the tree with her and placed her on a daisy, where she cried because she was so ugly that the chafers would



She was so happy now, because the toad could not reach her
and she was sailing through such lovely scenes

have nothing to do with her; and, after all, she was more beautiful than anything you could imagine, as delicate and transparent as the finest rose-leaf.

Poor little Thumbelisa lived all the summer quite alone in the wood. She plaited a bed of grass for herself and hung it up under a big dock-leaf which sheltered her from the rain; she sucked the honey from the flowers for her food, and her drink was the dew which lay on the leaves in the morning. In this way the summer and autumn passed, but then came the winter. All the birds which used to sing so sweetly to her flew away, the great dock-leaf under which she had lived shrivelled up, leaving nothing but a dead yellow stalk, and she shivered with the cold, for her clothes were worn out; she was such a tiny creature, poor little Thumbelisa, she certainly must be frozen to death. It began to snow and every snowflake which fell upon her was like a whole shovelful upon one of us, for we are big and she was only one inch in height. Then she wrapped herself up in a withered leaf, but that did not warm her much, she trembled with the cold.

Close to the wood in which she had been living lay a large cornfield, but the corn had long ago been carried away and nothing remained but the bare, dry stubble which stood up out of the frozen ground. The stubble was quite a forest for her to walk about in: oh, how she shook with the cold. Then she came to the door of a field-mouse's home. It was a little hole down under the stubble. The field-mouse lived so cosily and warm there, her whole room was full of corn, and she had a beautiful kitchen and larder besides. Poor Thumbelisa stood just inside the door like any other poor beggar child and begged for a little piece of barley corn, for she had had nothing to eat for two whole days.

"You poor little thing," said the field-mouse, for she was at bottom a good old field-mouse. "Come into my warm room and dine with me." Then, as she took a fancy to Thumbelisa, she said, "You may with pleasure stay with me for the

winter, but you must keep my room clean and tidy and tell me stories, for I am very fond of them," and Thumbelisa did what the good old field-mouse desired and was on the whole very comfortable.

"Now we shall soon have a visitor," said the field-mouse; "my neighbour generally comes to see me every week-day. He is even better housed than I am; his rooms are very large, and he wears a most beautiful black velvet coat; if only you could get him for husband you would indeed be well settled, but he can't see. You must tell him all the most beautiful stories you know."

But Thumbelisa did not like this, and she would have nothing to say to the neighbour, for he was a mole. He came and paid a visit in his black velvet coat. He was very rich and wise, said the field-mouse, and his home was twenty times as large as hers; and he had much learning, but he did not like the sun or the beautiful flowers, in fact he spoke slightly of them, for he had never seen them. Thumbelisa had to sing to him, and she sang both "Fly away, cockchafer" and "A monk, he wandered through the meadow," then the mole fell in love with her because of her sweet voice, but he did not say anything, for he was of a discreet turn of mind.

He had just made a long tunnel through the ground from his house to theirs, and he gave the field-mouse and Thumbelisa leave to walk in it whenever they liked. He told them not to be afraid of the dead bird which was lying in the passage. It was a whole bird with feathers and beak which had probably died quite recently at the beginning of the winter and was now entombed just where he had made his tunnel.

The mole took a piece of tinder-wood in his mouth, for that shines like fire in the dark, and walked in front of them to light them in the long dark passage; when they came to the place where the dead bird lay, the mole thrust his broad nose up to the roof and pushed the earth up so as to make a big hole through which the daylight shone. In the middle

of the floor lay a dead swallow, with its pretty wings closely pressed to its sides, and the legs and head drawn in under the feathers; no doubt the poor bird had died of cold. Thumbelisa was so sorry for it; she loved all the little birds, for they had twittered and sung so sweetly to her during the whole summer; but the mole kicked it with his short legs and said, "Now it will pipe no more! It must be a miserable fate to be born a little bird! Thank heaven! no child of mine can be a bird; a bird like that has nothing but its twitter and dies of hunger in the winter."

"Yes, as a sensible man, you may well say that," said the field-mouse. "What *has* a bird for all its twittering when the cold weather comes? It has to hunger and freeze, but then it must cut a dash."

Thumbelisa did not say anything, but when the others turned their backs to the bird, she stooped down and stroked aside the feathers which lay over its head, and kissed its closed eyes. "Perhaps it was this very bird which sang so sweetly to me in the summer," she thought; "what pleasure it gave me, the dear pretty bird."

The mole now closed up the hole which let in the daylight and conducted the ladies to their home. Thumbelisa could not sleep at all in the night, so she got up out of her bed and plaited a large handsome mat of hay and then she carried it down and spread it all over the dead bird, and laid some soft cotton wool which she had found in the field-mouse's room close round its sides, so that it might have a warm bed on the cold ground.

"Good-bye, you sweet little bird," said she, "good-bye, and thank you for your sweet song through the summer when all the trees were green and the sun shone warmly upon us." Then she laid her head close up to the bird's breast, but was quite startled at a sound, as if something was thumping inside it. It was the bird's heart. It was not dead but lay in a swoon, and now that it had been warmed it began to revive.

In the autumn all the swallows fly away to warm countries, but if one happens to be belated, it feels the cold so much that it falls down like a dead thing, and remains lying where it falls till the snow covers it up. Thumbelisa quite shook with fright, for the bird was very, very big beside her, who was only one inch high; but she gathered up her courage, packed the wool closer round the poor bird, and fetched a leaf of mint which she had herself for a coverlet, and laid it over the bird's head. The next night she stole down again to it and found it alive but so feeble that it could only just open its eyes for a moment to look at Thumbelisa who stood with a bit of tinder-wood in her hand, for she had no other lantern.

"Many, many thanks, you sweet child," said the sick swallow to her; "you have warmed me beautifully. I shall soon have strength to fly out into the warm sun again."

"Oh!" said she, "it is so cold outside, it snows and freezes, stay in your warm bed, I will tend you." Then she brought water to the swallow in a leaf, and when it had drunk some it told her how it had torn its wing on a blackthorn bush, and therefore could not fly as fast as the other swallows which were taking flight then for the distant warm lands. At last it fell down on the ground, but after that it remembered nothing and did not in the least know how it had got into the tunnel.

It stayed there all the winter, and Thumbelisa was good to it and grew very fond of it. She did not tell either the mole or the field-mouse anything about it, for they did not like the poor unfortunate swallow.

As soon as the spring came and the warmth of the sun penetrated the ground, the swallow said good-bye to Thumbelisa, who opened the hole which the mole had made above. The sun streamed in deliciously upon them, and the swallow asked if she would not go with him; she could sit upon his back and they would fly far away into the green wood. But Thumbelisa knew that it would grieve the old field-mouse if she left her like that.

“No, I can’t,” said Thumbelisa.

“Good-bye, good-bye, then, you kind pretty girl,” said the swallow, and flew out into the sunshine. Thumbelisa looked after him and her eyes filled with tears, for she was very fond of the poor swallow.

“Tweet, tweet,” sang the bird, and flew into the green wood.

Thumbelisa was very sad. She was not allowed to go out into the warm sunshine at all; the corn which was sown in the field near the field-mouse’s house grew quite long; it was a thick forest for the poor little girl who was only an inch high.

“You must work at your trousseau this summer,” said the field-mouse to her, for their neighbour the tiresome mole in his black velvet coat had asked her to marry him. “You shall have both woollen and linen, you shall have wherewith to clothe and cover yourself when you become the mole’s wife.” Thumbelisa had to turn the distaff and the field-mouse hired four spiders to spin and weave day and night. The mole paid a visit every evening, and he was always saying that when the summer came to an end the sun would not shine nearly so warmly, now it burnt the ground as hard as a stone. Yes, when the summer was over he would celebrate his marriage; but Thumbelisa was not at all pleased, for she did not care a bit for the tiresome mole. Every morning at sunrise and every evening at sunset she used to steal out to the door, and when the wind blew aside the tops of the cornstalks so that she could see the blue sky, she thought how bright and lovely it was out there, and wished so much to see the dear swallow again; but it never came back; no doubt it was a long way off, flying about in the beautiful green woods.

When the autumn came all Thumbelisa’s outfit was ready.

“In four weeks you must be married,” said the field-mouse to her. But Thumbelisa cried and said that she would not have the tiresome mole for a husband.

"Fiddle-dee-dee," said the field-mouse: "don't be obstinate or I shall bite you with my white tooth. You are going to have a splendid husband; the queen herself hasn't the equal of his black velvet coat; both his kitchen and his cellar are full. You should thank heaven for such a husband!"

So they were to be married; the mole had come to fetch Thumbelisa; she was to live deep down under the ground with him, and never to go out into the warm sunshine, for he could not bear it. The poor child was very sad at the thought of bidding good-bye to the beautiful sun; while she had been with the field-mouse she had at least been allowed to look at it from the door.

"Good-bye, you bright sun," she said as she stretched out her arms toward it and went a little way outside the field-mouse's house, for now the harvest was over and only the stubble remained. "Good-bye, good-bye!" she said, and threw her tiny arms round a little red flower growing there. "Give my love to the dear swallow if you happen to see him."

"Tweet, tweet," she heard at this moment above her head. She looked up; it was the swallow just passing. As soon as it saw Thumbelisa it was delighted; she told it how unwilling she was to have the ugly mole for a husband, and that she was to live deep down underground where the sun never shone. She could not help crying about it.

"The cold winter is coming," said the swallow, "and I am going to fly away to warm countries. Will you go with me? You can sit upon my back! Tie yourself on with your sash; then we will fly away from the ugly mole and his dark cavern, far away over the mountains to those warm countries where the sun shines with greater splendour than here, where it is always summer and there are heaps of flowers. Do fly with me, you sweet little Thumbelisa, who saved my life when I lay frozen in the dark earthy passage."

"Yes, I will go with you," said Thumbelisa, seating herself on the bird's back, with her feet on its outspread wings.



“You shall not be called Thumbelisa, that is such an ugly name, and you are so pretty. We will call you May”

She tied her band tightly to one of the strongest feathers, and then the swallow flew away, high up in the air above forests and lakes, high up above the biggest mountains where the snow never melts; and Thumbelisa shivered in the cold air, but then she crept under the bird's warm feathers, and only stuck out her little head to look at the beautiful sights beneath her.

Then at last they reached the warm countries. The sun shone with a warmer glow than here; the sky was twice as high, and the most beautiful green and blue grapes grew in clusters on the banks and hedgerows. Oranges and lemons hung in the woods, which were fragrant with myrtles and sweet herbs, and beautiful children ran about the roads playing with the large gorgeously coloured butterflies. But the swallow flew on and on, and the country grew more and more beautiful. Under magnificent green trees on the shores of the blue sea stood a dazzling white marble palace of ancient date; vines wreathed themselves round the stately pillars. At the head of these there were countless nests, and the swallow who carried Thumbelisa lived in one of them.

"Here is my house," said the swallow; "but if you will choose one of the gorgeous flowers growing down there, I will place you in it, and you will live as happily as you can wish."

"That would be delightful," she said, and clapped her little hands.

A great white marble column had fallen to the ground and lay there broken in three pieces, but between these the most lovely white flowers grew. The swallow flew down with Thumbelisa and put her upon one of the broad leaves; what was her astonishment to find a little man in the middle of the flower, as bright and transparent as if he had been made of glass. He had a lovely golden crown upon his head and the most beautiful bright wings upon his shoulders; he was no bigger than Thumbelisa. He was the angel of the flowers. There was a similar little man or woman in every flower, but he was the king of them all.

"Heavens, how beautiful he is," whispered Thumbelisa to the swallow. The little prince was quite frightened by the swallow, for it was a perfect giant of a bird to him, he who was so small and delicate, but when he saw Thumbelisa he was delighted; she was the very prettiest girl he had ever seen. He therefore took the golden crown off his own head and placed it on hers, and asked her name, and if she would be his wife, and then she would be queen of the flowers! Yes, he was certainly a very different kind of husband from the toad's son, or the mole with his black velvet coat. So she accepted the beautiful prince, and out of every flower stepped a little lady or a gentleman so lovely that it was a pleasure to look at them. Each one brought a gift to Thumbelisa, but the best of all was a pair of pretty wings from a large white fly; they were fastened on to her back, and then she too could fly from flower to flower. All was then delight and happiness, but the swallow sat alone in his nest and sang to them as well as he could, for his heart was heavy, he was so fond of Thumbelisa himself, and would have wished never to part from her.

"You shall not be called Thumbelisa," said the angel of the flower to her; "that is such an ugly name, and you are so pretty. We will call you May."

"Good-bye, good-bye," said the swallow, and flew away again from the warm countries, far away back to Denmark; there he had a little nest above the window where the man lived who wrote this story, and he sang his "tweet, tweet," to the man, and so we have the whole story.





THE GIRL WHO TROD ON A LOAF

IDARESAY you have heard of the girl who stepped on a loaf, so as not to soil her shoes, and all the misfortunes that befell her in consequence. At any rate the story has been written and printed, too.

She was a poor child, of a proud and arrogant nature, and her disposition was bad from the beginning. When she was quite tiny, her greatest delight was to catch flies and pull their wings off, to make creeping insects of them. Then she would catch chafers and beetles and stick them on a pin, after which she would push a leaf or a bit of paper close enough for them to seize with their feet; for the pleasure of seeing them writhe and wriggle in their efforts to free themselves from the pins.

“The chafer is reading now,” said little Inger; “look at it turning over the page!”

She got worse rather than better as she grew older; but she was very pretty, and that no doubt was her misfortune, or she might have had many a beating which she never got.

"It will take a heavy blow to bend that head," said her own mother. "As a child you have often trampled on my apron; I fear when you are grown up you will trample on my heart!"

This she did with a vengeance.

She was sent into service in the country with some rich people. They treated her as if she had been their own child, and dressed her in the same style. She grew prettier and prettier, but her pride grew, too.

When she had been with them a year, her employers said to her, "You ought to go home to see your parents, little Inger!"

So she went, but she went to show herself only, so that they might see how grand she was. When she got to the town gates, and saw the young men and maids gossiping round the pond, and her mother sitting among them with a bundle of sticks she had picked up in the woods, Inger turned away. She was ashamed that one so fine as herself should have such a ragged old woman, who picked up sticks, for her mother. She was not a bit sorry that she had turned back, only angry.

Another half year passed.

"Little Inger, you really ought to go and see your old parents," said her mistress. "Here is a large loaf of wheaten bread you may take to them. They will be pleased to see you."

Inger put on all her best clothes, and her fine new shoes; she held up her skirts and picked her steps carefully so as to keep her shoes nice and clean. Now no one could blame her for this; but when she came to the path through the marsh a great part of it was wet and muddy, and she threw the loaf into the mud for a stepping-stone, to get over with dry shoes. As she stood there with one foot on the loaf and was lifting up the other for the next step, the loaf sank deeper and deeper with her till she entirely disappeared. Nothing was to be seen but a black bubbling pool.

Now this is the story.

But what had become of her? She went down to the Marsh-wife, who has a brewery down there. The Marsh-wife is own sister to the Elf-king, and aunt to the Elf-maidens, who are well enough known. They have had verses written about them and pictures painted; but all that people know about the Marsh-wife is that when the mist rises over the meadows in the summer she is at her brewing. It was into this brewery that little Inger fell, and no one can stand being there long. A scavenger's cart is sweet compared to the Marsh-wife's brewery. The smell from the barrels is enough to turn people faint, and the barrels are so close together that no one can pass between them, but wherever there is a little chink it is filled up with noisome toads and slimy snakes. Little Inger fell among all this horrid living filth; it was so icy cold that she shuddered from head to foot, and her limbs grew quite stiff. The loaf stuck fast to her feet and it drew her down just as an amber button draws a bit of straw.

The Marsh-wife was at home. Old Bogey and his great-grandmother were paying her a visit. The great-grandmother is a very venomous old woman, and she is never idle. She never goes out without her work, and she had it with her to-day, too. She was busily making gad-about leather to put into people's shoes, so that the wearer might have no rest. She embroidered lies, and strung together all the idle words which fell to the ground, to make mischief of them. Oh, yes, old great-grandmother can knit and embroider in fine style.

As soon as she saw little Inger, she put up her eyeglass and looked at her through it. "That girl has got something in her," she said; "I should like to have her as a remembrance of my visit. She would make a very good statue in my great-grandson's outer corridor."

So Inger was given to her and this was how she got to Bogey-land. People don't always get there by such a direct route, though it is easy enough to get there in more round-about ways.

What a never-ending corridor that was to be sure; it made one giddy to look either backward or forward. Here stood an ignominious crew waiting for the door of mercy to be opened, but long might they wait. Great, fat, sprawling spiders spun webs of a thousand years round and round their feet; and these webs were like footscrews and held them as in a vise, or as though bound with a copper chain. Besides, there was such everlasting unrest in every soul; the unrest of torment. The miser had forgotten the key of his money chest, he knew he had left it sticking in the lock. But it would take far too long to enumerate all the various tortures here. Inger experienced the torture of standing like a statue with a loaf tied to her feet.

“This is what comes of trying to keep one’s feet clean!” said she to herself. “Look how they stare at me.” They did indeed stare at her; all their evil passions shone out of their eyes and spoke without words from their lips. They were a terrible sight. “It must be a pleasure to look at me!” thought Inger, “for I have a pretty face and nice clothes,” and then she turned her eyes to look at them — her neck was too stiff. But, oh, how dirty she had got in the Marsh-wife’s brewery; she had never thought of that. Her clothes were covered with slime, a snake had got among her hair, and hung dangling down her back. A toad looked out of every fold in her dress, croaking like an asthmatic pug dog. It was most unpleasant. “But all the others down here look frightful, too,” was her consolation.

Worse than anything was the terrible hunger she felt, and she could not stoop down to break a bit of bread off the loaf she was standing on. No; her back had stiffened, her arms and hands had stiffened, and her whole body was like a pillar of stone. She could only turn her eyes, but she could turn them right round, so as to look backward; and a horrid sight it was. And then came the flies: they crept upon her eyes, and however much she winked they would not fly away; they could



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the torment fifty times worse

not, for she had pulled off their wings and made creeping insects of them. That was indeed a torment added to her gnawing hunger; she seemed at last to be absolutely empty.

“If this is to go on long I shan’t be able to bear it,” said she; but it did go on, and bear it she must.

Then a scalding tear fell upon her forehead, it trickled over her face and bosom right down to the loaf; then another fell, and another, till there was a perfect shower.

Who was crying for little Inger! Had she not a mother on earth? Tears of sorrow shed by a mother for her child will always reach it; but they do not bring healing, they burn and make the torment fifty times worse. Then this terrible hunger again, and she not able to get at the bread under her feet. She felt at last as if she had been feeding upon herself, and had become a mere hollow reed which conducts every sound. She distinctly heard everything that was said on earth about herself, and she heard nothing but hard words.

Certainly her mother wept bitterly and sorrowfully, but at the same time she said, “Pride goes before a fall! There was your misfortune, Inger! How you have grieved your mother.”

Her mother and every one on earth knew all about her sin, how she had stepped upon the loaf, and sunk down under the earth, and so was lost. The cowherd had told them so much; he had seen it himself from the hillock where he was standing.

“How you have grieved your mother, Inger,” said the poor woman. “But then I always said you would!”

“Oh, that I had never been born!” thought Inger then. “I should have been much better off. My mother’s tears are no good now.”

She heard the good people, her employers, who had been like parents to her, talking about her. “She was a sinful child,” they said. “She did not value the gifts of God, but trod them under foot. She will find it hard to open the door of mercy.”

"They ought to have brought me up better!" thought Inger; "they should have knocked the nonsense out of me if it was there."

She heard that a song had been written about her and sung all over the country, "The arrogant girl who trod on a loaf to keep her shoes clean."

"That I should hear that old story so often, and have to suffer so much for it!" thought Inger.

"The others ought to be punished for their sins, too," said Inger; "there would be plenty to punish. Oh, how I am being tormented!"

And her heart grew harder than her outer shell.

"Nobody will ever get any better in this company! and I won't be any better. Look how they are all staring at me!"

Her heart was full of anger and malice toward everybody.

"Now they have got something to talk about up there! Oh, this torture!"

She heard people telling her story to children, and the little ones always called her "wicked Inger" — "she was so naughty that she had to be tormented." She heard nothing but hard words from the children's mouths.

But one day when anger and hunger were gnawing at her hollow shell, she heard her name mentioned, and her story being told to an innocent child, a little girl, and the little creature burst into tears at the story of proud, vain Inger.

"But will she never come up here again?" asked the child, and the answer was, "She will never come up again."

"But if she was to ask pardon, and promise never to do it again!"

"She won't ask pardon," they said.

"But I want her to do it," said the little girl, who refused to be comforted. "I will give my doll's house if she may only come up again; it is so dreadful for poor Inger."

These words reached down into Inger's heart, and they seemed to do her good. It was the first time that any one

said "Poor Inger," without adding anything about her misdeeds. A little innocent child was weeping and praying for her, and it made her feel quite odd: she would have liked to cry herself, but she could not shed a tear, and this was a further torment.

As the years passed above, so they went on below without any change: she seldomer heard sounds from above, and she was less talked about. But one day she was aware of a sigh. "Inger, Inger, what a grief you have been to me, but I always knew you would." It was her mother, who was dying. Occasionally she heard her name mentioned by her old employers, and the gentlest words her mistress used were, "Shall I ever see you again, Inger? One never knows whither one may go!"

But Inger knew very well that her good, kindly mistress could never come to the place where she was.

Again a long bitter period passed. Then Inger again heard her name pronounced, and saw above her head what seemed to be two bright stars; they were in fact two kind eyes which were closing on earth. So many years had gone by since the little girl had cried so bitterly at the story of "Poor Inger," that the child had grown to be an old woman whom the Lord was now calling to Himself. In the last hour when one's whole life comes back to one, she remembered how as a little child she had wept bitter tears at the story of Inger. The impression was so clear to the old woman, in the hour of death, that she exclaimed aloud, "O Lord, may I not, like Inger, have trodden on Thy blessed gifts without thinking; and may I not also have nourished pride in my heart, but in Thy mercy Thou didst not let me fall! Forsake me not now in my last hour!"

The old woman's eyes closed, and the eyes of her soul were opened to see the hidden things, and as Inger had been so vividly present in her last thoughts she saw now how deep she had sank; and at the sight she burst into tears. Then she stood in the Kingdom of Heaven, as a child, weeping for poor

Inger. Her tears and prayers echoed into the hollow, empty shell which surrounded the imprisoned, tortured soul, and it was quite overwhelmed by all this unexpected love from above. An angel of God weeping over her! Why was this vouchsafed to her? The tortured soul recalled every earthly action it had ever performed, and at last it melted into tears, in a way Inger had never done. She was filled with grief for herself; it seemed as though the gate of mercy could never be opened to her. But as in humble contrition she acknowledged this, a ray of light shone into the gulf of destruction. The strength of the ray was far greater than that of the sunbeam which melts the snow-man built up by the boys in the garden; and sooner, much sooner, than a snowflake melts on the warm lips of a child, did Inger's stony form dissolve before it, and a little bird with lightning speed winged its way to the upper world. It was terribly shy and afraid of everything. It was ashamed of itself and afraid to meet the eye of any living being, so it hastily sought shelter in a chink in the wall. There it cowered, shuddering in every limb; it could not utter a sound, for it had no voice. It sat for a long time before it could survey calmly all the wonders around. Yes, they were wonders indeed, the air was so sweet and fresh, the moon shown so brightly, the trees and bushes were so fragrant; and then the comfort of it all, its feathers were so clean and dainty. How all creation spoke of love and beauty! The bird would gladly have sung aloud all these thoughts stirring in its breast, but it had not the power. Gladly would it have carolled as do the cuckoos and nightingales in summer. The good God who hears the voiceless hymn of praise even of a worm, was also aware of this psalm of thanksgiving trembling in the breast of the bird, as the psalms of David echoed in his heart before they shaped themselves into words and melody. These thoughts, and these voiceless songs grew, and swelled for weeks; they must have an outlet, and at the first attempt at a good deed this would be found.

Then came the holy Christmas Feast. The peasants raised a pole against a wall, and tied a sheaf of oats on to the top, so that the little birds might have a good meal on the happy Christmas day.

The sun rose bright and shone upon the sheaf of oats, and the twittering birds surrounded the pole. Then from the chink in the wall came a feeble tweet-tweet; the swelling thoughts of the bird had found a voice, and this faint twitter was its hymn of praise. The thought of a good deed was awakened, and the bird flew out of its hiding place; in the Kingdom of Heaven this bird was well known.

It was a very hard winter, and all the water had thick ice over it. The birds and wild creatures had great difficulty in finding food. The little bird flew along the highways finding here and there in the tracks of the sledges a grain of corn. At the baiting places it also found a few morsels of bread, of which it would only eat a crumb, and gave the rest to the other starving sparrows which it called up. Then it flew into the towns and peeped about. Wherever a loving hand had strewn bread crumbs for the birds, it only ate one crumb and gave the rest away.

In the course of the winter the bird had collected and given away so many crumbs of bread that they equalled in weight the whole loaf which little Inger had stepped upon to keep her shoes clean. When the last crumbs were found and given away, the bird's gray wings became white and spread themselves wide.

"A tern is flying away over the sea," said the children who saw the white bird. Now it dived into the sea, and now it soared up into the bright sunshine. It gleamed so brightly that it was not possible to see what became of it; they said it flew right into the sun.



IN CHINA, as you know, the emperor is a Chinaman, and all the people around him are Chinamen too. It is many years since the story I am going to tell you happened, but that is all the more reason for telling it, lest it should be forgotten. The emperor's palace was the most beautiful thing in the world; it was made entirely of the finest porcelain, very costly, but at the same time so fragile that it could only be touched with the very greatest care. There were the most extraordinary flowers to be seen in the garden; the most beautiful ones had little silver bells tied to them, which tinkled perpetually, so that one should not pass the flowers without looking at them. Every little detail in the garden had been most carefully thought out, and it was so big that even the gardener himself did not know where it ended. If one went on walking, one came to beautiful woods with lofty trees and deep lakes. The wood extended to the sea, which was deep and blue, deep enough for large ships to sail up right under the branches of the trees. Among these trees lived a nightingale

which sang so deliciously that even the poor fisherman, who had plenty of other things to do, lay still to listen to it, when he was out at night drawing in his nets. "Heavens, how beautiful it is!" he said, but then he had to attend to his business and forgot it. The next night when he heard it again he would again exclaim, "Heavens, how beautiful it is!"

Travellers came to the emperor's capital, from every country in the world; they admired everything very much, especially the palace and the gardens, but when they heard the nightingale they all said, "This is better than anything!"

When they got home they described it, and the learned ones wrote many books about the town, the palace and the garden, but nobody forgot the nightingale, it was always put above everything else. Those among them who were poets wrote the most beautiful poems, all about the nightingale in the woods by the deep blue sea. These books went all over the world, and in course of time some of them reached the emperor. He sat in his golden chair reading and reading, and nodding his head, well pleased to hear such beautiful descriptions of the town, the palace and the garden. "But the nightingale is the best of all," he read.

"What is this?" said the emperor. "The nightingale? Why, I know nothing about it. Is there such a bird in my kingdom, and in my own garden into the bargain, and I have never heard it! Imagine my having to discover this from a book!"

Then he called his gentleman-in-waiting, who was so grand that when any one of a lower rank dared to speak to him, or to ask him a question, he could only answer "P," which means nothing at all.

"There is said to be a very wonderful bird called a nightingale here," said the emperor. "They say that it is better than anything else in all my great kingdom! Why have I never been told anything about it?"

"I have never heard it mentioned," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "It has been never presented at court."

"I wish it to appear here this evening to sing to me," said the emperor. "The whole world knows what I am possessed of, and I know nothing about it!"

"I have never heard it mentioned before," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "I will seek it, and I will find it!" But where was it to be found? The gentleman-in-waiting ran upstairs and downstairs and in and out of all the rooms and corridors. No one of all those he met had ever heard anything about the nightingale; so the gentleman-in-waiting ran back to the emperor, and said that it must be a myth, invented by the writers of the books. "Your imperial majesty must not believe everything that is written; books are often mere inventions, even if they do not belong to what we call the black art!"

"But the book in which I read it is sent to me by the powerful Emperor of Japan, so it can't be untrue. I will hear this nightingale, I insist upon its being here to-night. I extend my most gracious protection to it, and if it is not forthcoming I will have the whole court trampled upon after supper!"

"Tsing-pe!" said the gentleman-in-waiting, and away he ran again, up and down all the stairs, in and out of all the rooms and corridors; half the court ran with him, for they none of them wished to be trampled on. There was much questioning about the nightingale, which was known to all the outside world, but to no one at court. At last they found a poor little maid in the kitchen. She said, "Oh, heavens, the nightingale? I know it very well. Yes, indeed, it can sing. Every evening I am allowed to take broken meat to my poor sick mother: she lives down by the shore. On my way back, when I am tired, I rest awhile in the wood, and then I hear the nightingale. Its song brings the tears into my eyes. I feel as if my mother were kissing me!"

"Little kitchen-maid," said the gentleman-in-waiting, "I

will procure you a permanent position in the kitchen and permission to see the emperor dining, if you will take us to the nightingale. It is commanded to appear at court to-night."

Then they all went out into the wood where the nightingale usually sang. Half the court was there. As they were going along at their best pace a cow began to bellow.

"Oh!" said a young courtier, "there we have it. What wonderful power for such a little creature; I have certainly heard it before."

"No, those are the cows bellowing; we are a long way yet from the place." Then the frogs began to croak in the marsh.

"Beautiful!" said the Chinese chaplain; "it is just like the tinkling of church bells."

"No, those are the frogs!" said the little kitchen-maid. "But I think we shall soon hear it now!"

Then the nightingale began to sing.

"There it is!" said the little girl. "Listen, listen, there it sits!" and she pointed to a little gray bird up among the branches.

"Is it possible?" said the gentleman-in-waiting. "I should never have thought it was like that. How common it looks. Seeing so many grand people must have frightened all its colours away."

"Little nightingale!" called the kitchen-maid quite loud, "our gracious emperor wishes you to sing to him!"

"With the greatest pleasure!" said the nightingale, warbling away in the most delightful fashion.

"It is just like crystal bells," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "Look at its little throat, how active it is. It is extraordinary that we have never heard it before! I am sure it will be a great success at court!"

"Shall I sing again to the emperor?" said the nightingale, who thought he was present.

"My precious little nightingale," said the gentleman-in-

waiting. "I have the honour to command your attendance at a court festival to-night, where you will charm his gracious majesty, the emperor, with your fascinating singing."

"It sounds best among the trees," said the nightingale, but it went with them willingly when it heard that the emperor wished it.

The palace had been brightened up for the occasion. The walls and the floors which were all of china shone by the light of many thousand golden lamps. The most beautiful flowers, all of the tinkling kind, were arranged in the corridors; there was hurrying to and fro, and a great draught, but this was just what made the bells ring, one's ears were full of the tinkling. In the middle of the large reception room where the emperor sat, a golden rod had been fixed, on which the nightingale was to perch. The whole court was assembled, and the little kitchen-maid had been permitted to stand behind the door, as she now had the actual title of cook. They were all dressed in their best; everybody's eyes were turned toward the little gray bird at which the emperor was nodding. The nightingale sang delightfully, and the tears came into the emperor's eyes, nay, they rolled down his cheeks, and then the nightingale sang more beautifully than ever, its notes touched all hearts. The emperor was charmed, and said the nightingale should have his gold slipper to wear round its neck. But the nightingale declined with thanks; it had already been sufficiently rewarded.

"I have seen tears in the eyes of the emperor; that is my richest reward. The tears of an emperor have a wonderful power! God knows I am sufficiently recompensed!" and then it again burst into its sweet heavenly song.

"That is the most delightful coquetting I have ever seen!" said the ladies, and they took some water into their mouths to try and make the same gurgling, when any one spoke to them, thinking so to equal the nightingale. Even the lackeys and the chambermaids announced that they were satisfied, and that is saying a great deal, they are always the most difficult



“Heavens, how beautiful it is!” he said, but then he had to attend to his business and forgot it

people to please. Yes, indeed, the nightingale had made a sensation. It was to stay at court now, and to have its own cage, as well as liberty to walk out twice a day, and once in the night. It always had twelve footmen with each one holding a ribbon which was tied round its leg. There was not much pleasure in an outing of that sort.

The whole town talked about the marvellous bird, and if two people met, one said to the other "Night," and the other answered "Gale," and then they sighed, perfectly understanding each other. Eleven cheesemongers' children were called after it, but they had not got a voice among them.

One day a large parcel came for the emperor; outside was written the word "Nightingale."

"Here we have another new book about this celebrated bird," said the emperor. But it was no book, it was a little work of art in a box, an artificial nightingale, exactly like the living one, but it was studded all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires.

When the bird was wound up, it could sing one of the songs the real one sang, and it wagged its tail which glittered with silver and gold. A ribbon was tied round its neck on which was written, "The Emperor of Japan's nightingale is very poor, compared to the Emperor of China's."

Everybody said, "Oh, how beautiful!" And the person who brought the artificial bird immediately received the title of Imperial Nightingale-Carrier in Chief.

"Now, they must sing together; what a duet that will be."

Then they had to sing together, but they did not get on very well, for the real nightingale sang in its own way, and the artificial one could only sing waltzes.

"There is no fault in that," said the music master; "it is perfectly in time and correct in every way!"

Then the artificial bird had to sing alone. It was just as great a success as the real one, and then it was so much prettier to look at, it glittered like bracelets and breastpins.

It sang the same tune three and thirty times over, and yet it was not tired; people would willingly have heard it from the beginning again, but the Emperor said that the real one must have a turn now — but where was it? No one had noticed that it had flown out of the open window, back to its own green woods.

“But what is the meaning of this?” said the emperor.

All the courtiers railed at it, and said it was a most ungrateful bird.

“We have got the best bird, though,” said they, and then the artificial bird had to sing again, and this was the thirty-fourth time that they heard the same tune, but they did not know it thoroughly even yet, because it was so difficult.

The music master praised the bird tremendously, and insisted that it was much better than the real nightingale, not only as regarded the outside with all the diamonds but the inside, too.

“Because you see, my ladies and gentleman, and the emperor before all, in the real nightingale you never know what you will hear, but in the artificial one everything is decided beforehand! So it is, and so it must remain, it can't be otherwise. You can account for things, you can open it and show the human ingenuity in arranging the waltzes, how they go, and how one note follows upon another!”

“Those are exactly my opinions,” they all said, and the music master got leave to show the bird to the public next Sunday. They were also to hear it sing, said the emperor. So they heard it, and all became as enthusiastic over it as if they had drunk themselves merry on tea, because that is a thoroughly Chinese habit.

Then they all said “Oh,” and stuck their forefingers in the air and nodded their heads; but the poor fishermen who had heard the real nightingale said, “It sounds very nice, and it is very like the real one, but there is something wanting, we

don't know what." The real nightingale was banished from the kingdom.

The artificial bird had its place on a silken cushion, close to the emperor's bed: all the presents it had received of gold and precious jewels were scattered round it. Its title had risen to be "Chief Imperial Singer of the bed chamber," in rank number one, on the left side; for the emperor reckoned that side the important one, where the heart was seated. And even an emperor's heart is on the left side. The music master wrote five and twenty volumes about the artificial bird; the treatise was very long, and written in all the most difficult Chinese characters. Everybody said they had read and understood it, for otherwise they would have been reckoned stupid, and then their bodies would have been trampled upon.

Things went on in this way for a whole year. The emperor, the court, and all the other Chinamen knew every little gurgle in the song of the artificial bird by heart; but they liked it all the better for this, and they could all join in the song themselves. Even the street boys sang "zizizi" and "cluck, cluck, cluck," and the emperor sang it, too.

But one evening when the bird was singing its best, and the emperor was lying in bed listening to it, something gave way inside the bird with a "whizz." Then a spring burst, "whirr" went all the wheels and the music stopped. The emperor jumped out of bed and sent for his private physicians, but what good could they do? Then they sent for the watchmaker, and after a good deal of talk and examination, he got the works to go again somehow; but he said it would have to be saved as much as possible, because it was so worn out and he could not renew the works so as to be sure of the tune. This was a great blow! They only dared to let the artificial bird sing once a year, and hardly that; but then the music master made a little speech, using all the most difficult words. He said it was just as good as ever, and his saying it made it so.

Five years now passed, and then a great grief came upon

the nation, for they were all very fond of their emperor, and he was ill and could not live, it was said. A new emperor was already chosen, and people stood about in the street and asked the gentleman-in-waiting how their emperor was going on.

"P," answered he, shaking his head.

The emperor lay pale and cold in his gorgeous bed, the courtiers thought he was dead, and they all went off to pay their respects to their new emperor. The lackeys ran off to talk matters over, and the chambermaids gave a great coffee party. Cloth had been laid down in all the rooms and corridors so as to deaden the sound of footsteps, so it was very, very quiet. But the emperor was not dead yet. He lay stiff and pale in the gorgeous bed with its velvet hangings and heavy golden tassels. There was an open window high above him, and the moon streamed in upon the emperor, and the artificial bird beside him.

The poor emperor could hardly breathe; he seemed to have a weight on his chest; he opened his eyes, and then he saw that it was Death sitting upon his chest, wearing his golden crown. In one hand he held the emperor's golden sword, and in the other his imperial banner. Round about, from among the folds of the velvet hangings, peered many curious faces; some were hideous, others gentle and pleasant. They were all the emperor's good and bad deeds, which now looked him in the face when Death was weighing him down.

"Do you remember that?" whispered one after the other; "Do you remember this?" and they told him so many things that the perspiration poured down his face.

"I never knew that," said the emperor. "Music, music, sound the great Chinese drums!" he cried, "that I may not hear what they are saying." But they went on and on, and Death sat nodding his head, just like a Chinaman, at everything that was said.

"Music, music!" shrieked the emperor. "You precious little golden bird, sing, sing! I have loaded you with precious



“Little nightingale!” called the kitchen maid quite loud, “our gracious emperor wishes you to sing to him!”

stones, and even hung my own golden slipper around your neck; sing, I tell you, sing!"

But the bird stood silent; there was nobody to wind it up, so of course it could not go. Death continued to fix the great empty sockets of its eyes upon him, and all was silent, so terribly silent.

Suddenly, close to the window, there was a burst of lovely song; it was the living nightingale, perched on a branch outside. It had heard of the emperor's need, and had come to bring comfort and hope to him. As it sang the faces round became fainter and fainter, and the blood coursed with fresh vigour in the emperor's veins, and through his feeble limbs. Even Death himself listened to the song and said, "Go on, little nightingale, go on!"

"Yes, if you give me the gorgeous golden sword; yes, if you give me the imperial banner; yes, if you give me the emperor's crown."

And Death gave back each of these treasures for a song, and the nightingale went on singing. It sang about the quiet churchyard, when the roses bloom, where the elder flower scents the air, and where the fresh grass is ever moistened anew by the tears of the mourner. This song brought to Death a longing for his own garden, and like a cold gray mist he passed out of the window.

"Thanks, thanks!" said the emperor; "you heavenly little bird, I know you! I banished you from my kingdom, and yet you have charmed the evil visions away from my bed by your song, and even Death away from my heart! How can I ever repay you?"

"You have rewarded me," said the nightingale. "I brought the tears to your eyes the very first time I ever sang to you, and I shall never forget it! Those are the jewels which gladden the heart of a singer—but sleep now, and wake up fresh and strong! I will sing to you!"

Then it sang again, and the emperor fell into a sweet re-

freshing sleep. The sun shone in at his window, when he woke refreshed and well; none of his attendants had yet come back to him, for they thought he was dead, but the nightingale still sat there singing.

“You must always stay with me!” said the emperor. “You shall only sing when you like, and I will break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces!”

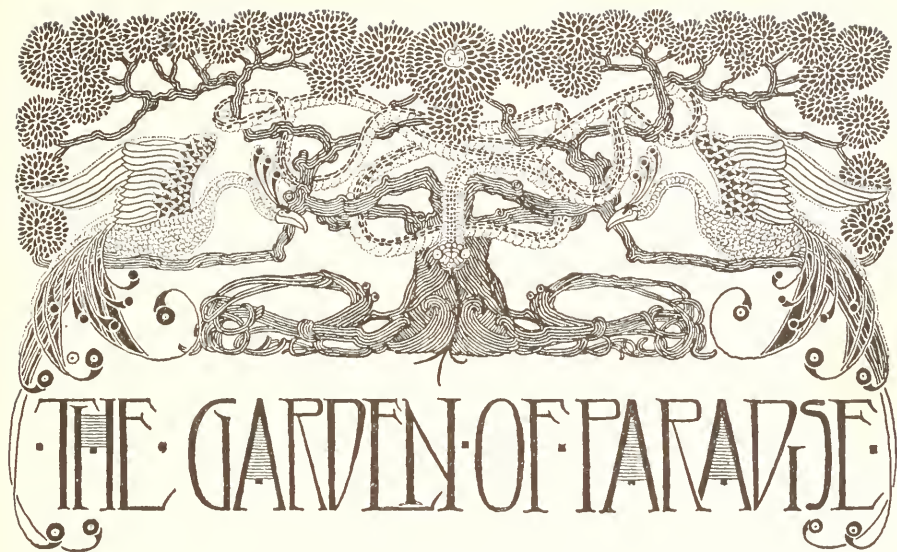
“Don't do that!” said the nightingale; “it did all the good it could! Keep it as you have always done! I can't build my nest and live in this palace, but let me come whenever I like, then I will sit on the branch in the evening and sing to you. I will sing to cheer you and to make you thoughtful, too; I will sing to you of the happy ones, and of those that suffer, too. I will sing about the good and the evil, which are kept hidden from you. The little singing bird flies far and wide, to the poor fisherman, and the peasant's home, to numbers who are far from you and your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and yet there is an odour of sanctity round the crown, too! I will come, and I will sing to you! But you must promise me one thing!”

“Everything!” said the emperor, who stood there in his imperial robes which he had just put on, and he held the sword heavy with gold upon his heart.

“One thing I ask you! Tell no one that you have a little bird who tells you everything; it will be better so!”

Then the nightingale flew away. The attendants came in to see after their dead emperor, and there he stood, bidding them “good-morning!”





THERE was once a king's son; nobody had so many or such beautiful books as he had. He could read about everything which had ever happened in this world, and see it all represented in the most beautiful pictures. He could get information about every nation and every country; but as to where the Garden of Paradise was to be found not a word could he discover, and this was the very thing he thought most about. His grandmother had told him, when he was quite a little fellow and was about to begin his school life, that every flower in the Garden of Paradise was a delicious cake and that the pistils were full of wine. In one flower history was written, in another geography or tables; you had only to eat the cake and you knew the lesson. The more you ate, the more history, geography, and tables you knew. All this he believed then; but as he grew older and wiser and learnt more, he easily perceived that the delights of the Garden of Paradise must be far beyond all this.

“Oh, why did Eve take of the tree of knowledge! Why

did Adam eat the forbidden fruit! If it had only been I it would not have happened! never would sin have entered the world!"

This is what he said then, and he still said it when he was seventeen; his thoughts were full of the Garden of Paradise.

He walked into the wood one day: he was alone, for that was his greatest pleasure. Evening came on, the clouds drew up and it rained as if the whole heaven had become a sluice from which the water poured in sheets: it was as dark as it is otherwise in the deepest well. Now he slipped on the wet grass, and then he fell on the bare stones which jutted out of the rocky ground. Everything was dripping, and at last the poor Prince hadn't got a dry thread on him. He had to climb over huge rocks where the water oozed out of the thick moss. He was almost fainting; just then he heard a curious murmuring and saw in front of him a big lighted cave. A fire was burning in the middle, big enough to roast a stag, which was in fact being done: a splendid stag with its huge antlers was stuck on a spit, being slowly turned round between the hewn trunks of two fir trees. An oldish woman, tall and strong enough to be a man dressed up, sat by the fire throwing on logs from time to time.

"Come in by all means!" she said: "sit down by the fire so that your clothes may dry!"

"There is a shocking draught here," said the Prince, as he sat down on the ground.

"It will be worse than this when my sons come home!" said the woman. "You are in the cavern of the winds; my sons are the four winds of the world! Do you understand?"

"Who are your sons?" asked the Prince.

"Well, that's not so easy to answer when the question is stupidly put," said the woman. "My sons do as they like; they are playing rounders now with the clouds up there in the great hall," and she pointed up into the sky.

"Oh, indeed!" said the Prince. "You seem to speak

very harshly, and you are not so gentle as the women I generally see about me!"

"Oh I daresay they have nothing else to do! I have to be harsh if I am to keep my boys under control! But I can do it, although they are a stiff-necked lot! Do you see those four sacks hanging on the wall? They are just as frightened of them as you used to be of the cane behind the looking glass. I can double the boys up, I can tell you, and then they have to go into the bag; we don't stand upon ceremony, and there they have to stay; they can't get out to play their tricks till it suits me to let them. But here we have one of them." It was the Northwind who came in with an icy blast; great hailstones peppered about the floor and snowflakes drifted in. He was dressed in bearskin trousers and jacket, and he had a sealskin cap drawn over his ears. Long icicles were hanging from his beard, and one hailstone after another dropped down from the collar of his jacket.

"Don't go straight to the fire," said the Princee. "You might easily get chilblains!"

"Chilblains!" said the Northwind with a loud laugh. "Chilblains! they are my greatest delight! What sort of a feeble creature are you? How did you get into the cave of the winds?"

"He is my guest," said the old woman, "and if you are not pleased with that explanation you may go into the bag! Now you know my opinion!"

This had its effect, and the Northwind told them where he came from, and where he had been for the last month.

"I come from the Arctic seas," he said. "I have been on Behring Island with the Russian walrus-hunters. I sat at the helm and slept when they sailed from the north cape, and when I woke now and then the stormy petrels were flying about my legs; they are queer birds; they give a brisk flap with their wings and then keep them stretched out and motionless, and even then they have speed enough."

"Pray don't be too long-winded," said the mother of the winds. "So at last you got to Behring Island!"

"It's perfectly splendid! There you have a floor to dance upon, as flat as a pancake, half-thawed snow, with moss; there were bones of whales and polar bears lying about; they looked like the legs and arms of giants covered with green mould. One would think that the sun had never shone on them. I gave a little puff to the fog so that one could see the shed. It was a house built of wreckage and covered with the skins of whales; the flesh side was turned outward; it was all red and green; a living polar bear sat on the roof growling. I went to the shore and looked at the birds' nests, looked at the unfledged young ones screaming and gaping; then I blew down thousands of their throats and they learnt to shut their mouths. Lower down the walruses were rolling about like monster maggots with pigs' heads and teeth a yard long!"

"You're a good story-teller, my boy!" said his mother. "It makes my mouth water to hear you!"

"Then there was a hunt! The harpoons were plunged into the walruses' breasts and the steaming blood spurted out of them, like fountains, over the ice. Then I remembered my part of the game! I blew up and made my ships, the mountain-high icebergs, nip the boats; whew! how they whistled and how they screamed, but I whistled louder. They were obliged to throw the dead walruses, chests, and ropes out upon the ice! I shook the snowflakes over them and let them drift southward to taste the salt water. They will never come back to Behring Island!"

"Then you've been doing evil!" said the mother of the winds.

"What good I did, the others may tell you," said he. "But here we have my brother from the west; I like him best of all, he smells of the sea and brings a splendid cool breeze with him!"

"Is that the little Zephyr?" asked the Prince.

“Yes, certainly it is Zephyr, but he is not so little as all that. He used to be a pretty boy once, but that’s gone by!”

He looked like a wild man of the woods, but he had a padded hat on so as not to come to any harm. He carried a mahogany club cut in the American mahogany forests. It could not be anything less than that.

“Where do you come from?” asked his mother.

“From the forest wildernesses!” he said, “where the thorny creepers make a fence between every tree, where the water-snake lies in the wet grass, and where human beings seem to be superfluous!”

“What did you do there?”

“I looked at the mighty river, saw where it dashed over the rocks, in dust, and flew with the clouds to carry the rainbow. I saw the wild buffalo swimming in the river, but the stream carried him away; he floated with the wild duck, which soared into the sky at the rapids; but the buffalo was carried over with the water. I liked that and blew a storm, so that the primeval trees had to sail, too, and they were whirled about like shavings.”

“And you have done nothing else?” asked the old woman.

“I have been turning somersaults in the savannahs, patting the wild horse, and shaking down cocoanuts! Oh, yes, I have plenty of stories to tell! But one need not tell everything. You know that very well, old woman!” and then he kissed his mother so heartily that she nearly fell backward: he was indeed a wild boy.

The Southwind appeared now in a turban and a flowing bedouin’s cloak.

“It is fearfully cold in here,” he said, throwing wood on the fire; “it is easy to see that the Northwind got here first!”

“It is hot enough here to roast a polar bear,” said the Northwind.

“You are a polar bear yourself!” said the Southwind.

"Do you want to go into the bag?" asked the old woman. "Sit down on that stone and tell us where you have been."

"In Africa, mother!" he answered. "I have been chasing the lion with the Hottentots in Kaffirland! What grass there is on those plains! as green as an olive. The gnu was dancing about, and the ostriches ran races with me, but I am still the fastest. I went to the desert with its yellow sand. It looks like the bottom of the sea. I met a caravan! They were killing their last camel to get water to drink, but it wasn't much they got. The sun was blazing above, and the sand burning below. There were no limits to the outstretched desert. Then I burrowed into the fine loose sand and whirled it up in great columns — that was a dance! You should have seen how despondently the dromedaries stood, and the merchant drew his caftan over his head. He threw himself down before me as if I had been Allah, his god. Now they are buried, and there is a pyramid of sand over them all; when I blow it away, sometime the sun will bleach their bones, and then travellers will see that people have been there before, otherwise you would hardly believe it in the desert."

"Then you have only been doing harm!" said the mother. "Into the bag you go!" And before he knew where he was she had the Southwind by the waist and in the bag; it rolled about on the ground, but she sat down upon it and then it had to be quiet.

"Your sons are lively fellows!" said the Prince.

"Yes, indeed," she said; "but I can master them. Here comes the fourth."

It was the Eastwind, and he was dressed like a Chinaman.

"Oh, have you come from that quarter?" said the mother. "I thought you had been in the Garden of Paradise."

"I am only going there to-morrow!" said the Eastwind. "It will be a hundred years to-morrow since I have been there. I have just come from China, where I danced round the porcelain



The eagle in the great forest flew swiftly, but the Eastwind flew more swiftly still

tower till all the bells jingled. The officials were flogged in the streets, the bamboo canes were broken over their shoulders, and they were all people ranging from the first to the ninth rank. They shrieked, 'Many thanks, Father and benefactor,' but they didn't mean what they said, and I went on ringing the bells and singing 'Tsing, tsang, tsu!'"

"You're quite uproarious about it!" said the old woman. "It's a good thing you are going to the Garden of Paradise to-morrow; it always has a good effect on your behaviour. Mind you drink deep of the well of wisdom, and bring a little bottleful home to me."

"That I will," said the Eastwind. "But why have you put my brother from the south into the bag? Out with him! He must tell me about the phœnix; the Princess always wants to hear about that bird when I call every hundred years. Open the bag! Then you'll be my sweetest mother, and I'll give you two pockets full of tea as green and fresh as when I picked it!"

"Well, for the sake of the tea, and because you are my darling, I will open my bag!"

She did open it and the Southwind crept out, but he was quite crestfallen because the strange Prince had seen his disgrace.

"Here is a palm leaf for the Princess!" said the Southwind. "The old phœnix, the only one in the world, gave it to me. He has scratched his whole history on it with his bill, for the hundred years of his life, and she can read it for herself. I saw how the phœnix set fire to his nest himself, and sat on it while it burnt, like the widow of a Hindoo. Oh, how the dry branches crackled, how it smoked, and what a smell there was! At last it all burst into flame, the old bird was burnt to ashes, but his eggs lay glowing in the fire; it broke with a loud bang and the young one flew out. Now it rules over all the birds and it is the only phœnix in the world. He bit a hole in the leaf I gave you; that is his greeting to the Princess."

"Let us have something to eat now!" said the mother of the winds; and they all sat down to eat the roast stag, and the Prince sat by the side of the Eastwind, so they soon became good friends.

"I say," said the Prince, "just tell me who is this Princess, and where is the Garden of Paradise?"

"Oh ho!" said the Eastwind, "if that is where you want to go you must fly with me to-morrow. But I may as well tell you that no human being has been there since Adam and Eve's time. You know all about them, I suppose, from your Bible stories?"

"Of course," said the Prince.

"When they were driven away the Garden of Eden sank into the ground, but it kept its warm sunshine, its mild air, and all its charms. The queen of the fairies lives there. The Island of Bliss, where death never enters, and where living is a delight, is there. Get on my back to-morrow and I will take you with me; I think I can manage it! But you mustn't talk now, I want to go to sleep."

When the Prince woke up in the early morning, he was not a little surprised to find that he was already high above the clouds. He was sitting on the back of the Eastwind, who was holding him carefully; they were so high up that woods and fields, rivers and lakes, looked like a large coloured map.

"Good-morning," said the Eastwind. "You may as well sleep a little longer, for there is not much to be seen in this flat country below us, unless you want to count the churches. They look like chalk dots on the green board."

He called the fields and meadows "the green board."

"It was very rude of me to leave without saying good-bye to your mother and brothers," said the Prince.

"One is excused when one is asleep!" said the Eastwind, and they flew on faster than ever. You could mark their flight by the rustling of the trees as they passed over the woods; and whenever they crossed a lake, or the sea, the waves

rose and the great ships dipped low down in the water, like floating swans. Toward evening the large towns were amusing as it grew dark, with all their lights twinkling now here, now there, just as when one burns a piece of paper and sees all the little sparks like children coming home from school. The Prince clapped his hands, but the Eastwind told him he had better leave off and hold tight, or he might fall and find himself hanging on to a church steeple.

The eagle in the great forest flew swiftly, but the Eastwind flew more swiftly still. The Kossack on his little horse sped fast over the plains, but the Prince sped faster still.

“Now you can see the Himalayas!” said the Eastwind. “They are the highest mountains in Asia; we shall soon reach the Garden of Paradise.”

They took a more southerly direction, and the air became scented with spices and flowers. Figs and pomegranates grew wild, and the wild vines were covered with blue and green grapes. They both descended here and stretched themselves on the soft grass, where the flowers nodded to the wind, as much as to say, “Welcome back.”

“Are we in the Garden of Paradise now?” asked the Prince.

“No, certainly not!” answered the Eastwind. “But we shall soon be there. Do you see that wall of rock and the great cavern where the wild vine hangs like a big curtain? We have to go through there! Wrap yourself up in your cloak, the sun is burning here, but a step farther on it is icy cold. The bird which flies past the cavern has one wing out here in the heat of summer, and the other is there in the cold of winter.”

“So that is the way to the Garden of Paradise!” said the Prince.

Now they entered the cavern. Oh, how icily cold it was, but it did not last long. The Eastwind spread his wings, and they shone like the brightest flame; but what a cave it was! Large blocks of stone, from which the water dripped, hung over them in the most extraordinary shapes; at one

moment it was so low and narrow that they had to crawl on hands and knees, the next it was as wide and lofty as if they were in the open air. It looked like a chapel of the dead, with mute organ pipes and petrified banners.

"We seem to be journeying along Death's road to the Garden of Paradise!" said the Prince; but the Eastwind never answered a word; he only pointed before them where a beautiful blue light was shining. The blocks of stone above them grew dimmer and dimmer, and at last they became as transparent as a white cloud in the moonshine. The air was also deliciously soft, as fresh as on the mountain tops and as scented as down among the roses in the valley.

A river ran there as clear as the air itself, and the fish in it were like gold and silver. Purple eels which gave out blue sparks with every curve gambolled about in the water; and the broad leaves of the water lilies were tinged with the hues of the rainbow, while the flower itself was like a fiery orange flame, nourished by the water, just as oil keeps a lamp constantly burning. A firm bridge of marble as delicately and skilfully carved as if it were lace and glass beads led over the water to the Island of Bliss, where the Garden of Paradise bloomed.

The Eastwind took the Prince in his arms and bore him over. The flowers and leaves there sang all the beautiful old songs of his childhood, but sang them more wonderfully than any human voice could sing them.

Were these palm trees or giant water plants growing here? The Prince had never seen such rich and mighty trees. The most wonderful climbing plants hung in wreaths such as are only to be found pictured in gold and colours on the margins of old books of the Saints or entwined among their initial letters. It was the most extraordinary combination of birds, flowers, and scrolls.

Close by on the grass stood a flock of peacocks with their brilliant tails outspread. Yes, indeed, it seemed so, but when

the Prince touched them he saw that they were not birds but plants. They were big dock leaves, which shone like peacocks' tails. Lions and tigers sprang like agile cats among the green hedges, which were scented with the blossom of the olive, and the lion and the tiger were tame. The wild dove, glistening like a pearl, beat the lion's mane with his wings; and the antelope, otherwise so shy, stood by nodding, just as if he wanted to join the game.

The Fairy of the Garden now advanced to meet them; her garments shone like the sun, and her face beamed like that of a happy mother rejoicing over her child. She was young and very beautiful, and was surrounded by a band of lovely girls each with a gleaming star in her hair.

When the Eastwind gave her the inscribed leaf from the phœnix her eyes sparkled with delight. She took the Prince's hand and led him into her palace, where the walls were the colour of the brightest tulips in the sunlight. The ceiling was one great shining flower, and the longer one gazed into it the deeper the calyx seemed to be. The Prince went to the window, and looking through one of the panes saw the Tree of Knowledge, with the Serpent, and Adam and Eve standing by.

"Are they not driven out?" he asked, and the Fairy smiled and explained that Time had burned a picture into each pane, but not of the kind one usually sees; they were alive, the leaves on the trees moved, and people came and went like the reflections in a mirror.

Then he looked through another pane, and he saw Jacob's dream, with the ladder going straight up into heaven, and angels with great wings were fluttering up and down. All that had ever happened in this world lived and moved on these window panes; only Time could imprint such wonderful pictures.

The Fairy smiled and led him into a large, lofty room, the walls of which were like transparent paintings of faces, one more beautiful than the other. These were millions of the Blessed who smiled and sang, and all their songs melted into

one perfect melody. The highest ones were so tiny that they seemed smaller than the very smallest rosebud, no bigger than a pinpoint in a drawing. In the middle of the room stood a large tree, with handsome drooping branches; golden apples, large and small, hung like oranges among its green leaves. It was the Tree of Knowledge, of whose fruit Adam and Eve had eaten. From every leaf hung a shining red drop of dew; it was as if the tree wept tears of blood.

"Now let us get into the boat," said the Fairy. "We shall find refreshment on the swelling waters. The boat rocks, but it does not move from the spot; all the countries of the world will pass before our eyes."

It was a curious sight to see the whole coast move. Here came lofty snow-clad Alps, with their clouds and dark fir trees. The horn echoed sadly among them, and the shepherd yodelled sweetly in the valleys. Then banian trees bent their long drooping branches over the boat, black swans floated on the water, and the strangest animals and flowers appeared on the shore. This was New Holland, the fifth portion of the world, which glided past them with a view of its blue mountains. They heard the song of priests, and saw the dances of the savages to the sound of drums and pipes of bone. The pyramids of Egypt reaching to the clouds, with fallen columns, and Sphynxes half buried in sand, next sailed past them. Then came the Aurora Borealis blazing over the peaks of the north; they were fireworks which could not be imitated. The Prince was so happy, and he saw a hundred times more than we have described.

"Can I stay here always?" he asked.

"That depends upon yourself," answered the Fairy. "If you do not, like Adam, allow yourself to be tempted to do what is forbidden, you can stay here always."

"I will not touch the apples on the Tree of Knowledge," said the Prince. "There are thousands of other fruits here as beautiful."

"Test yourself, and if you are not strong enough, go



The Fairy of the Garden now advanced to meet them; her garments shone like the sun, and her face beamed like that of a happy mother

back with the Eastwind who brought you. He is going away now, and will not come back for a hundred years; the time will fly in this place like a hundred hours, but that is a long time for temptation and sin. Every evening when I leave you I must say 'Come with me,' and I must beckon to you, but stay behind. Do not come with me, for with every step you take your longing will grow stronger. You will reach the hall where grows the Tree of Knowledge; I sleep beneath its fragrant drooping branches. You will bend over me and I must smile, but if you press a kiss upon my lips, Paradise will sink deep down into the earth, and it will be lost to you. The sharp winds of the wilderness will whistle round you, the cold rain will drop from your hair. Sorrow and labour will be your lot."

"I will remain here!" said the Prince.

And the Eastwind kissed him on the mouth and said: "Be strong, then we shall meet again in a hundred years. Farewell! Farewell!" and the Eastwind spread his great wings; they shone like poppies at the harvest time, or the Northern Lights in a cold winter.

"Good-bye! good-bye!" whispered the flowers. Storks and pelicans flew in a line like waving ribbons, conducting him to the boundaries of the Garden.

"Now we begin our dancing!" said the Fairy; "at the end when I dance with you, as the sun goes down you will see me beckon to you and cry, 'Come with me'; but do not come. I have to repeat it every night for a hundred years. Every time you resist, you will grow stronger, and at last you will not even think of following. To-night is the first time. Remember my warning!"

And the Fairy led him into a large hall of white transparent lilies; the yellow stamens in each formed a little golden harp which echoed the sound of strings and flutes. Lovely girls, slender and lissom, dressed in floating gauze which revealed their exquisite limbs, glided in the dance and sang of the joy of living — that they would never die — and that the Garden of Paradise would bloom forever.

The sun went down and the sky was bathed in golden light which gave the lilies the effect of roses; and the Prince drank of the foaming wine handed to him by the maidens. He felt such joy as he had never known before; he saw the background of the hall opening where the Tree of Knowledge stood in a radiancy which blinded him. The song proceeding from it was soft and lovely, like his mother's voice, and she seemed to say, "My child, my beloved child!"

Then the Fairy beckoned to him and said so tenderly, "Come with me," that he rushed toward her, forgetting his promise, forgetting everything on the very first evening that she smiled and beckoned to him.

The fragrance in the scented air around grew stronger, the harps sounded sweeter than ever, and it seemed as if the millions of smiling heads in the hall where the Tree grew, nodded and sang, "One must know everything. Man is lord of the earth." They were no longer tears of blood which fell from the Tree; it seemed to him that they were red shining stars.

"Come with me, come with me," spoke those trembling tones, and at every step the Prince's cheeks burnt hotter and hotter and his blood coursed more rapidly.

"I must go," he said; "it is no sin, I must see her asleep; nothing will be lost if I do not kiss her, and that I will not do. My will is strong."

The Fairy dropped her shimmering garment, drew back the branches, and a moment after was hidden within their depths.

"I have not sinned yet!" said the Prince, "nor will I"; then he drew back the branches. There she lay asleep already beautiful as only the Fairy in the Garden of Paradise can be. She smiled; in her dreams; he bent over her and saw the tears welling up under her eyelashes.

"Do you weep for me?" he whispered. "Weep not, beautiful maiden. I only now understand the full bliss of Paradise; it surges through my blood and through my thoughts.



There she lay asleep already, beautiful as only the Fairy in the Garden of Paradise can be

I feel the strength of the angels and of everlasting life in my mortal limbs! If it were to be everlasting night to me a moment like this were worth it!" and he kissed away the tears from her eyes; his mouth touched hers.

Then came a sound like thunder, louder and more awful than any he had ever heard before, and everything around collapsed. The beautiful Fairy, the flowery Paradise, sank deeper and deeper. The Prince saw it sink into the darkness of night; it shone far off like a little, tiny, twinkling star. The chill of death crept over his limbs; he closed his eyes and lay long as if dead.

The cold rain fell on his face, and the sharp wind blew around his head, and at last his memory came back. "What have I done?" he sighed. "I have sinned like Adam, sinned so heavily that Paradise has sunk low beneath the earth!" And he opened his eyes; he could still see the star, the far-away star, which twinkled like Paradise; it was the morning star in the sky. He got up and found himself in the wood near the cave of the winds, and the mother of the winds sat by his side. She looked angry and raised her hand.

"So soon as the first evening!" she said. "I thought as much; if you were my boy, you should go into the bag!"

"Ah, he shall soon go there!" said Death. He was a strong old man, with a scythe in his hand and great black wings. "He shall be laid in a coffin, but not now; I only mark him and then leave him for a time to wander about on the earth to expiate his sin and to grow better. I will come some time. When he least expects me I shall come back, lay him in a black coffin, put it on my head, and fly to the skies. The Garden of Paradise blooms there, too, and if he is good and holy he shall enter into it; but if his thoughts are wicked and his heart still full of sin, he will sink deeper in his coffin than Paradise sank, and I shall only go once in every thousand years to see if he is to sink deeper or to rise to the stars, the twinkling stars up there."



ABOUT WALDEMAR DAA AND HIS DAUGHTERS

WHEN the wind sweeps across a field of grass it makes little ripples in it like a lake; in a field of corn it makes great waves like the sea itself; this is the wind's frolic. Then listen to the stories it tells; it sings them aloud, one kind of song among the trees of the forest, and a very different one when it is pent up within walls with all their cracks and cran- nies. Do you see how the wind chases the white fleecy clouds as if they were a flock of sheep? Do you hear the wind down there, howling in the open doorway like a watchman winding his horn? Then, too, how he whistles in the chimneys, making the fire crackle and sparkle. How cozy it is to sit in the warm glow of the fire listening to the tales it has to tell! Let the wind tell its own story! It can tell you more adventures than all of us put together. Listen now:

“Whew! Whew! Fare away!” That was the refrain of his song.

“Close to the Great Belt stands an old mansion with

thick red walls," says the wind. "I know every stone of it. I knew them before when they formed part of Marsk Stig's Castle on the Ness; it had to come down. The stones were used again, and made a new wall of a new castle in another place, Borreby Hall as it now stands.

"I have watched the high-born men and women of all the various races who have lived there, and now I am going to tell you about Waldemar Daa and his daughters!

"He held his head very high, for he came of a royal stock! He knew more than the mere chasing of a stag, or the emptying of a flagon; he knew how to manage his affairs, he said himself.

"His lady wife walked proudly across the brightly polished floors, in her gold brocaded kirtle; the tapestries in the rooms were gorgeous, and the furniture of costly carved woods. She had brought much gold and silver plate into the house with her, and the cellars were full of German ale, when there was anything there at all. Fiery black horses neighed in the stables; Borreby Hall was a very rich place when wealth came there.

"Then there were the children, three dainty maidens, Ida, Johanna, and Anna Dorothea. I remember their names well.

"They were rich and aristocratic people and they were born and bred in wealth! Whew! whew! fare away!" roared the wind, then he went on with his story.

"I did not see here, as in other old noble castles, the high-born lady sitting among her maidens in the great hall turning the spinning wheel. No, she played upon the ringing lute, and sang to its tones. Her songs were not always the old Danish ditties, however, but songs in foreign tongues. All was life and hospitality; noble guests came from far and wide; there were sounds of music and the clanging of flagons so loud that I could not drown them!" said the wind. "Here were arrogance and ostentation enough and to spare; plenty of lords, but the Lord had no place there.

"Then came the evening of May-day!" said the wind.

"I came from the west; I had been watching ships being wrecked and broken up on the west coast of Jutland. I tore over the heaths and the green wooded coasts, across the island of Funen and over the Great Belt, puffing and blowing. I settled down to rest on the coast of Zealand close to Borreby Hall, where the splendid forest of oaks still stood. The young bachelors of the neighbourhood came out and collected fagots and branches, the longest and driest they could find. These they took to the town, piled them up in a heap, and set fire to them; then the men and maidens danced and sang round the bonfire. I lay still," said the wind, "but I softly moved a branch, the one laid by the handsomest young man, and his billet blazed up highest of all. He was the chosen one, he had the name of honour, he became 'Buck of the Street!' and he chose from among the girls his little May-lamb. All was life and merriment, greater far than within rich Borreby Hall.

"The great lady came driving toward the Hall, in her gilded chariot drawn by six horses. She had her three dainty daughters with her; they were indeed three lovely flowers. A rose, a lily, and a pale hyacinth. The mother herself was a gorgeous tulip; she took no notice whatever of the crowd, who all stopped in their game to drop their curtsseys and make their bows; one might have thought that, like a tulip, she was rather frail in the stalk and feared to bend her back. The rose, the lily, and the pale hyacinth, yes, I saw them all three. Whose May-lambs were they one day to become, thought I; their mates would be proud knights — perhaps even princes!

"Whew! whew! fare away! Yes, the chariot bore them away, and the peasants whirled on in their dance. They played at 'Riding the summer into the village,' to Borreby village, Tareby village, and many others.

"But that night when I rose," said the wind, "the noble lady laid herself down to rise no more; that came to her which comes to every one — there was nothing new about it. Walde-

mar Daa stood grave and silent for a time. 'The proudest tree may bend, but it does not break,' said something within him. The daughters wept and every one else at the Castle was wiping their eyes; but Madam Daa had fared away, and I fared away too! Whew! whew!" said the wind.

"I came back again; I often came back across the island of Funen and the waters of the Belt and took up my place on Borreby shore close to the great forest of oaks. The ospreys and the wood pigeons used to build in it, the blue raven, and even the black stork! It was early in the year; some of the nests were full of eggs, while in others the young ones were just hatched. What a flying and screaming was there! Then came the sound of the axe, blow upon blow; the forest was to be felled. Waldemar Daa was about to build a costly ship, a three-decked man-of-war, which it was expected the King would buy. So the wood fell, the ancient landmark of the seaman, the home of the birds. The shrike was frightened away; its nest was torn down; the osprey and all the other birds lost their nests, too, and they flew about distractedly, shrieking in their terror and anger. The crows and the jackdaws screamed in mockery, 'Caw! caw!' Waldemar Daa and his three daughters stood in the middle of the wood among the workmen. They all laughed at the wild cries of the birds except Anna Dorothea, who was touched by their distress, and when they were about to fell a tree which was half-dead, and on whose naked branches a black stork had built its nest, out of which the young ones were sticking their heads, she begged them with tears in her eyes to spare it. So the tree with the black stork's nest was allowed to stand. It was only a little thing.

"The chopping and the sawing went on—the three-decker was built. The master builder was a man of humble origin, but of noble loyalty; great power lay in his eyes and on his forehead, and Waldemar Daa liked to listen to him, and little Ida liked to listen, too, the eldest, fifteen-year-old daughter. But whilst he built the ship for her father, he built a

castle in the air for himself, in which he and little Ida sat side by side as man and wife. This might also have happened if his castle had been built of solid stone, with moat and ramparts, wood and gardens. But with all his wisdom, the shipbuilder was only a poor bird, and what business has a sparrow in a crane's nest? Whew! whew! I rushed away, and he rushed away, for he dared not stay, and little Ida got over it, as get over it she must.

"The fiery black horses stood neighing in the stables; they were worth looking at, and they were looked at to some purpose, too. An admiral was sent from the King to look at the new man-of-war, with a view to purchasing it. The admiral was loud in his admiration of the horses. I heard all he said," added the wind. "I went through the open door with the gentlemen and scattered the straw like gold before their feet. Waldemar Daa wanted gold; the admiral wanted the black horses, and so he praised them as he did; but his hints were not taken, therefore the ship remained unsold. There it stood by the shore covered up with boards, like a Noah's Ark which never reached the water. Whew! whew! get along! get along! It was a miserable business. In the winter, when the fields were covered with snow, and the Belt was full of ice-floes which I drove up on to the coast," said the wind, "the ravens and crows came in flocks, the one blacker than the other, and perched upon the desolate, dead ship by the shore. They screamed themselves hoarse about the forest which had disappeared, and the many precious birds' nests which had been devastated, leaving old and young homeless; and all for the sake of this old piece of lumber, the proud ship which was never to touch the water! I whirled the snow about till it lay in great heaps round the ship. I let it hear my voice, and all that a storm has to say. I know that I did my best to give it an idea of the sea. Whew! whew!

"The winter passed by; winter and summer passed away! They come and go just as I do. The snowflakes, the apple

blossoms, and the leaves fall, each in their turn. Whew! whew! they pass away as men pass, too!

“The daughters were still young. Little Ida, the rose, as lovely to look at as when the shipbuilder turned his gaze upon her. I often took hold of her long brown hair when she stood lost in thought by the apple tree in the garden. She never noticed that I showered apple blossoms over her loosened hair; she only gazed at the red sunset against the golden background of the sky, and the dark trees and bushes of the garden. Her sister Johanna was like a tall, stately lily; she held herself as stiffly erect as her mother, and seemed to have the same dread of bending her stem. She liked to walk in the long gallery where the family portraits hung. The ladies were painted in velvet and silk, with tiny pearl embroidered caps on their braided tresses. Their husbands were all clad in steel, or in costly cloaks lined with squirrel skins and stiff blue ruffs; their swords hung loosely by their sides. Where would Johanna’s portrait one day hang on these walls? What would her noble husband look like? These were her thoughts, and she even spoke them aloud; I heard her as I swept through the long corridor into the gallery, where I veered round again.

“Anna Dorothea, the pale hyacinth, was only a child of fourteen, quiet and thoughtful. Her large blue eyes as clear as water were very solemn, but childhood’s smile still played upon her lips; I could not blow it away, nor did I wish to do so. I used to meet her in the garden, the ravine, and in the manor fields. She was always picking flowers and herbs, those she knew her father could use for healing drinks and potions. Waldemar Daa was proud and conceited, but he was also learned, and he knew a great deal about many things. One could see that, and many whispers went about as to his learning. The fire blazed in his stove even in summer, and his chamber door was locked. This went on for days and nights, but he did not talk much about it. One must deal silently

with the forces of nature. He would soon discover the best of everything, the red, red gold!

"This was why his chimney flamed and smoked and sparkled. Yes, I was there, too," said the wind.

"Away with you, away! I sang in the back of the chimney. Smoke, smoke, embers and ashes, that is all it will come to! You will burn yourself up in it. Whew! whew! away with it! But Waldemar Daa could not let it go.

"The fiery steeds in the stable, where were they? The old gold and silver plate in cupboard and chest, where was that? The cattle, the land, the castle itself? Yes, they could all be melted down in the crucible, but yet no gold would come.

"Barn and larder got emptier and emptier. Fewer servants; more mice. One pane of glass got broken and another followed it. There was no need for me to go in by the doors," said the wind. "A smoking chimney means a cooking meal, but the only chimney which smoked here swallowed up all the meals, all for the sake of the red gold.

"I blew through the castle gate like a watchman blowing his horn, but there was no watchman," said the wind. "I twisted round the weatherecock on the tower and it creaked as if the watchman up there was snoring, only there was no watchman. Rats and mice were the only inhabitants. Poverty laid the table; poverty lurked in wardrobe and larder. The doors fell off their hinges, cracks and crannies appeared everywhere; I went in and out," said the wind, "so I know all about it."

"The hair and the beard of Waldemar Daa grew gray, in the sorrow of his sleepless nights, amid smoke and ashes. His skin grew grimy and yellow, and his eyes greedy for gold, the long expected gold.

"I whistled through the broken panes and fissures, blew into the daughters' chests where their clothes lay faded and threadbare; they had to last forever. A song like this had never been sung over the cradles of these children. A lordly life became a woeful life! I was the only one to sing in the



She was always picking flowers and herbs, those she knew her father could use for healing drinks and potions

castle now," said the wind. "I snowed them up, for they said it gave warmth. They had no firewood, for the forest was cut down where they should have got it. There was a biting frost. Even I had to keep rushing through the crannies and passages to keep myself lively. They stayed in bed to keep themselves warm, those noble ladies. Their father crept about under a fur rug. Nothing to bite, and nothing to burn! a lordly life indeed! Whew! whew! let it go! But this was what Waldemar Daa could not do.

"'After winter comes the spring,' said he; 'a good time will come after a time of need; but they make us wait their pleasure, wait! The castle is mortgaged, we are in extremities — and yet the gold will come — at Easter!'

"I heard him murmur to the spider's web 'You clever little weaver! You teach me to persevere! If your web is broken, you begin at the beginning again and complete it! Broken again — and cheerfully you begin it over again. That is what one must do and one will be rewarded!'

"It was Easter morning, the bells were ringing, and the sun was at play in the heavens. Waldemar Daa had watched through the night with his blood at fever pitch; boiling and cooling, mixing and distilling. I heard him sigh like a despairing soul, I heard him pray, and I felt that he held his breath. The lamp had gone out, but he never noticed it. I blew up the embers and they shone upon his ashen face, which took a tinge of colour from their light; his eyes started in their sockets; they grew larger and larger as if they would leap out.

"Look at the alchemist's glass! something twinkles in it, it is glowing, pure and heavy. He lifted it with a trembling hand and shouted with a trembling voice: 'Gold! gold!' He reeled, and I could easily have blown him over," said the wind, "but I only blew upon the embers, and followed him to the room where his daughters sat shivering. His coat was powdered with ash, as well as his beard and his matted hair. He drew himself up to his full height and held up his precious treasure.

in the fragile glass. 'Found! won! gold!' he cried, stretching up his hand with the glass which glittered in the sunbeams; his hand shook and the alchemist's glass fell to the ground shivered into a thousand atoms. The last bubble of his welfare was shattered, too. Whew! whew! fare away! and away I rushed from the goldmaker's home.

"Late in the year, when the days were short and dark up here, and the fog enveloped the red berries and bare branches with its cold moisture, I came along in a lively mood, clearing the sky and snapping off the dead boughs. This is no great labour, it is true, yet it has to be done. Borreby Hall, the home of Waldemar Daa, was having a clean sweep of a different sort. The family enemy, Ové Ramel from Vasness, appeared, holding the mortgage of the Hall and all its contents. I drummed upon the cracked window panes, beat against the decaying doors, and whistled through all the cracks and crannies, whew! I did my best to prevent Herr Ové taking a fancy to stay there. Ida and Anna Dorothea faced it bravely, although they shed some tears; Johanna stood pale and erect and bit her finger till it bled! much that would help her! Ové Ramel offered to let them stay on at the Castle for Waldemar Daa's lifetime, but he got no thanks for his offer; I was listening. I saw the ruined gentleman stiffen his neck and hold his head higher than ever. I beat against the walls and the old linden trees with such force that the thickest branch broke, although it was not a bit rotten. It fell across the gate like a broom, as if some one was about to sweep; and a sweeping there was indeed to be. I quite expected it. It was a grievous day and a hard time for them, but their wills were as stubborn as their necks were stiff. They had not a possession in the world but the clothes on their backs; yes, one thing — an alchemist's glass which had been bought and filled with the fragments scraped up from the floor. The treasure which promised much and fulfilled nothing. Waldemar Daa hid it in his bosom, took his staff in his hand, and with his three daughters the once wealthy gentleman walked out of

Borreby Hall for the last time. I blew a cold blast upon his burning cheeks, I fluttered his gray beard and his long white hair; I sang such a tune as only I could sing. Whew! whew! away with them! away with them! This was the end of all their grandeur.

“Ida and Anna Dorothea walked one on each side of him; Johanna turned round in the gateway, but what was the good of that? nothing could make their luck turn. She looked at the red stones of what had once been Marsk Stig's Castle. Was she thinking of his daughters?

‘The elder took the younger by the hand,
And out they roamed to a far off land.’

Was she thinking of that song? Here there were three and their father was with them. They walked along the road where once they used to ride in their chariot. They trod it now as vagrants, on their way to a plastered cottage on Smidstrup Heath, which was rented at ten marks yearly. This was their new country seat with its empty walls and its empty vessels. The crows and the magpies wheeled screaming over their heads with their mocking ‘Caw, caw! Out of the nest! Caw! caw!’ just as they screamed in Borreby Forest when the trees were felled.

“Herr Daa and his daughters must have noticed it. I blew into their ears to try and deaden the cries, which after all were not worth listening to.

“So they took up their abode in the plastered cottage on Smidstrup Heath, and I tore off over marshes and meadows, through naked hedges and bare woods, to the open seas and other lands. Whew! whew! away, away! and that for many years.”

What happened to Waldemar Daa? What happened to his daughters? This is what the wind relates:

“The last of them I saw, yes, for the last time, was Anna Dorothea, the pale hyacinth. She was old and bent now;

it was half a century later. She lived the longest; she had gone through everything.

“Across the heath, near the town of Viborg, stood the Dean’s new, handsome mansion, built of red stone, with toothed gables. The smoke curled thickly out of the chimneys. The gentle lady and her fair daughters sat in the bay window looking into the garden at the drooping thorns and out to the brown heath beyond. What were they looking at there? They were looking at a stork’s nest on a tumbledown cottage; the roof was covered, as far as there was any roof to cover, with moss and house-leek; but the stork’s nest made the best covering. It was the only part to which anything was done, for the stork kept it in repair.

“This house was only fit to be looked at, not to be touched. I had to mind what I was about,” said the wind. “The cottage was allowed to stand for the sake of the stork’s nest; in itself it was only a scarecrow on the heath, but the Dean did not want to frighten away the stork, so the hovel was allowed to stand. The poor soul inside was allowed to live in it; she had the Egyptian bird to thank for that; or was it repayment for having once pleaded for the nest of his wild black brother in Borreby Forest? Then, poor thing, she was a child, a delicate, pale hyacinth in a noble flower garden. Poor Anna Dorothea; she remembered it all! Ah, human beings can sigh as well as the wind when it sighs through the rushes and reeds.

““Oh dear! Oh dear! No bells rang over the grave of Waldemar Daa. No schoolboys sang when the former lord of Borreby Castle was laid in his grave. Well, everything must have an end, even misery! Sister Ida became the wife of a peasant, and this was her father’s sorest trial. His daughter’s husband a miserable serf, who might at any moment be ordered the punishment of the wooden horse by his lord. It is well that the sod covers him now, and you, too, Ida! Ah yes! ah yes! Poor me, poor me! I still linger on. In Thy mercy release me, O Christ!”

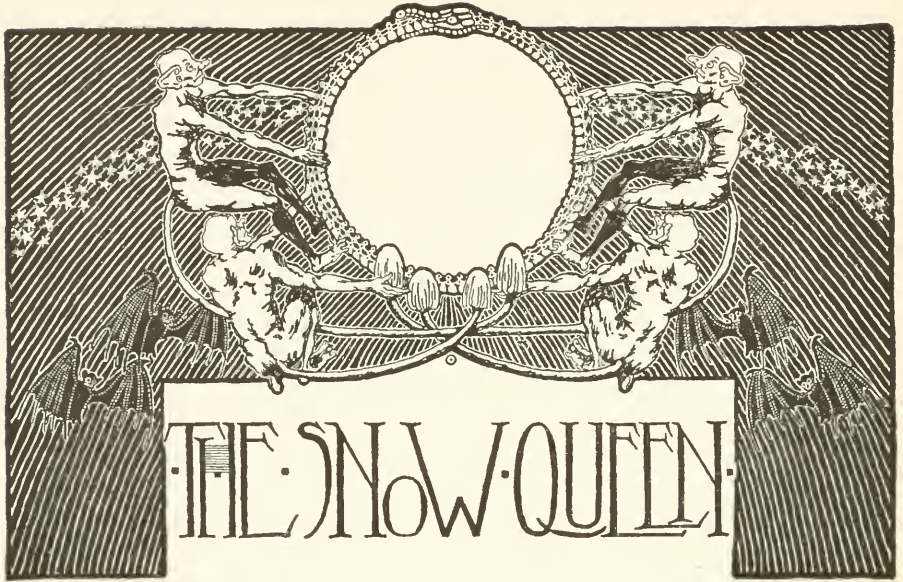
"This was the prayer of Anna Dorothea, as she lay in the miserable hovel which was only left standing for the sake of the stork.

"I took charge of the boldest of the sisters," said the wind. "She had clothes made to suit her manly disposition and took a place as a lad with a skipper. Her words were few, and looks stubborn, but she was willing enough at her work. But with all her will she could not climb the rigging; so I blew her overboard before any one discovered that she was a woman, and I fancy that was not a bad deed of mine!" said the wind.

"On such an Easter morning as that on which Waldemar Daa thought he had found the red gold, I heard from beneath the stork's nest a psalm echoing through the miserable walls. It was Anna Dorothea's last song. There was no window; only a hole in the wall. The sun rose in splendour and poured in upon her; her eyes were glazed and her heart broken! This would have been so this morning whether the sun had shone upon her or not. The stork kept a roof over her head till her death! I sang at her grave," said the wind, "and I sang at her father's grave. I know where it is, and her's, too, which is more than any one else knows.

"The old order changeth, giving place to the new. The old high-road now only leads to cultivated fields, while peaceful graves are covered by the busy traffic on the new road. Soon comes Steam with its row of wagons behind it, rushing over the graves, forgotten, like the names upon them. Whew! whew! Let us be gone! This is the story of Waldemar Daa and his daughters. Tell it better yourselves, if you can," said the wind, as it veered round. Then it was gone.





A TALE IN SEVEN STORIES

FIRST STORY

DEALS with a mirror and its fragments. Now we are about to begin, and you must attend; and when we get to the end of the story, you will know more than you do now about a very wicked hobgoblin. He was one of the worst kind; in fact he was a real demon. One day he was in a high state of delight because he had invented a mirror with this peculiarity, that every good and pretty thing reflected in it shrank away to almost nothing. On the other hand, every bad and good-for-nothing thing stood out and looked its worst. The most beautiful landscapes reflected in it looked like boiled spinach, and the best people became hideous, or else they were upside down and had no bodies. Their faces were distorted beyond recognition, and if they had even one freckle it appeared to spread all over the nose and mouth. The demon thought this immensely amusing. If a good thought passed

through any one's mind, it turned to a grin in the mirror, and this caused real delight to the demon. All the scholars in the demon's school, for he kept a school, reported that a miracle had taken place; now for the first time it had become possible to see what the world and mankind were really like. They ran about all over with the mirror, till at last there was not a country or a person which had not been seen in this distorting mirror. They even wanted to fly up to heaven with it to mock the angels; but the higher they flew, the more it grinned, so much so that they could hardly hold it, and at last it slipped out of their hands and fell to the earth, shivered into hundreds of millions and billions of bits. Even then it did more harm than ever. Some of these bits were not as big as a grain of sand, and these flew about all over the world, getting into people's eyes, and, once in, they stuck there, and distorted everything they looked at, or made them see everything that was amiss. Each tiniest grain of glass kept the same power as that possessed by the whole mirror. Some people even got a bit of the glass into their hearts, and that was terrible, for the heart became like a lump of ice. Some of the fragments were so big that they were used for window panes, but it was not advisable to look at one's friends through these panes. Other bits were made into spectacles, and it was a bad business when people put on these spectacles meaning to be just. The bad demon laughed till he split his sides; it tickled him to see the mischief he had done. But some of these fragments were still left floating about the world, and you shall hear what happened to them.

SECOND STORY

ABOUT A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL

In a big town crowded with houses and people, where there is no room for gardens; people have to be content with flowers in pots instead. In one of these towns lived two children who managed to have something bigger than a flower pot

for a garden. They were not brother and sister, but they were just as fond of each other as if they had been. Their parents lived opposite each other in two attic rooms. The roof of one house just touched the roof of the next one, with only a rain-water gutter between them. They each had a little dormer window, and one only had to step over the gutter to get from one house to the other. Each of the parents had a large window-box, in which they grew pot herbs and a little rose tree. There was one in each box, and they both grew splendidly. Then it occurred to the parents to put the boxes across the gutter, from house to house, and they looked just like two banks of flowers. The pea vines hung down over the edges of the boxes, and the roses threw out long creepers which twined round the windows. It was almost like a green triumphal arch. The boxes were high, and the children knew they must not climb up onto them, but they were often allowed to have their little stools out under the rose trees, and there they had delightful games. Of course in the winter there was an end to these amusements. The windows were often covered with hoarfrost; then they would warm coppers on the stove and stick them on the frozen panes, where they made lovely peep-holes as round as possible. Then a bright eye would peep through these holes, one from each window. The little boy's name was Kay, and the little girl's Gerda.

In the summer they could reach each other with one bound, but in the winter they had to go down all the stairs in one house and up all the stairs in the other, and outside there were snowdrifts.

"Look! the white bees are swarming," said the old grandmother.

"Have they a queen bee, too?" asked the little boy, for he knew that there was a queen among the real bees.

"Yes, indeed, they have," said the grandmother. "She flies where the swarm is thickest. She is the biggest of them all, and she never remains on the ground. She always flies



“Look! the white bees are swarming”

up again to the sky. Many a winter's night she flies through the streets and peeps in at the windows, and then the ice freezes on the panes into wonderful patterns like flowers."

"Oh, yes, we have seen that," said both children, and then they knew it was true.

"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Just let her come," said the boy, "and I will put her on the stove, where she will melt."

But the grandmother smoothed his hair and told him more stories.

In the evening when little Kay was at home and half undressed, he crept up onto the chair by the window, and peeped out of the little hole. A few snowflakes were falling, and one of these, the biggest, remained on the edge of the window-box. It grew bigger and bigger, till it became the figure of a woman, dressed in the finest white gauze, which appeared to be made of millions of starry flakes. She was delicately lovely, but all ice, glittering, dazzling ice. Still she was alive, her eyes shone like two bright stars, but there was no rest or peace in them. She nodded to the window and waved her hand. The little boy was frightened and jumped down off the chair, and then he fancied that a big bird flew past the window.

The next day was bright and frosty, and then came the thaw — and after that the spring. The sun shone, green buds began to appear, the swallows built their nests, and people began to open their windows. The little children began to play in their garden on the roof again. The roses were in splendid bloom that summer; the little girl had learnt a hymn, and there was something in it about roses, and that made her think of her own. She sang it to the little boy, and then he sang it with her:

"Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!"

The children took each other by the hands, kissed the roses, and rejoiced in God's bright sunshine, and spoke to it

as if the Child Jesus were there. What lovely summer days they were, and how delightful it was to sit out under the fresh rose trees, which seemed never tired of blooming.

Kay and Gerda were looking at a picture book of birds and animals one day — it had just struck five by the church clock — when Kay said: “Oh, something struck my heart, and I have got something in my eye!”

The little girl put her arms round his neck, and he blinked his eye; there was nothing to be seen.

“I believe it is gone,” he said, but it was not gone. It was one of those very grains of glass from the mirror, the magic mirror. You remember that horrid mirror, in which all good and great things reflected in it became small and mean while the bad things were magnified, and every flaw became very apparent.

Poor Kay! a grain of it had gone straight to his heart, and would soon turn it to a lump of ice. He did not feel it any more, but it was still there.

“Why do you cry?” he asked; “it makes you look ugly; there’s nothing the matter with me. How horrid!” he suddenly cried; “there’s a worm in that rose, and that one is quite crooked; after all, they are nasty roses, and so are the boxes they are growing in!” He kicked the box and broke off two of the roses.

“What are you doing, Kay?” cried the little girl. When he saw her alarm, he broke off another rose, and then ran in by his own window, and left dear little Gerda alone.

When she next got out the picture book he said it was only fit for babies in long clothes. When his grandmother told them stories he always had a but — and if he could manage it, he liked to get behind her chair, put on her spectacles and imitate her. He did it very well and people laughed at him. He was soon able to imitate every one in the street; he could make fun of all their peculiarities and failings. “He will turn out a clever fellow,” said people. But it was all

that bit of glass in his heart, that bit of glass in his eye, and it made him tease little Gerda, who was so devoted to him. He played quite different games now; he seemed to have grown older. One winter's day, when the snow was falling fast, he brought in a big magnifying glass; he held out the tail of his blue coat, and let the snowflakes fall upon it.

"Now look through the glass, Gerda!" he said; every snowflake was magnified, and looked like a lovely flower, or a sharply pointed star.

"Do you see how cleverly they are made?" said Kay. "Much more interesting than looking at real flowers, and there is not a single flaw in them, they are perfect; if only they would not melt."

Shortly after he appeared in his thick gloves, with his sledge on his back. He shouted right into Gerda's ear: "I have got leave to drive in the big square where the other boys play!" and away he went.

In the big square the bolder boys used to tie their little sledges to the farm carts and go a long way in this fashion. They had no end of fun over it. Just in the middle of their games a big sledge came along; it was painted white and the occupant wore a white fur coat and cap. The sledge drove twice round the square, and Kay quickly tied his sledge on behind. Then off they went, faster, and faster, into the next street. The driver turned round and nodded to Kay in the most friendly way, just as if they knew each other. Every time Kay wanted to loose his sledge, the person nodded again, and Kay stayed where he was, and they drove right out through the town gates. Then the snow began to fall so heavily that the little boy could not see a hand before him as they rushed along. He undid the cords and tried to get away from the big sledge, but it was no use, his little sledge stuck fast, and on they rushed, faster than the wind. He shouted aloud, but nobody heard him, and the sledge tore on through the snow-drifts. Every now and then it gave a bound, as if they were

jumping over hedges and ditches. He was very frightened, and he wanted to say his prayers, but he could only remember the multiplication tables.

The snowflakes grew bigger and bigger till at last they looked like big, white chickens. All at once they sprang on one side, the big sledge stopped and the person who drove got up, coat and cap smothered in snow. It was a tall and upright lady all shining white, the Snow Queen herself.

"We have come along at a good pace," she said; "but it's cold enough to kill one; creep inside my bearskin coat."

She took him into the sledge by her, wrapped him in her furs, and he felt as if he were sinking into a snowdrift.

"Are you still cold?" she asked, and she kissed him on the forehead. Ugh! it was colder than ice, it went to his very heart, which was already more than half ice; he felt as if he were dying, but only for a moment, and then it seemed to have done him good; he no longer felt the cold.

"My sledge! don't forget my sledge!" He only remembered it now; it was tied to one of the white chickens which flew along behind them. The Snow Queen kissed Kay again, and then he forgot all about little Gerda, grandmother, and all the others at home.

"Now I mustn't kiss you any more," she said, "or I should kiss you to death!"

Kay looked at her, she was so pretty; a cleverer, more beautiful face could hardly be imagined. She did not seem to be made of ice now, as she was outside the window when she waved her hand to him. In his eyes she was quite perfect, and he was not a bit afraid of her; he told her that he could do mental arithmetic, as far as fractions, and that he knew the number of square miles and the number of inhabitants of the country. She always smiled at him, and he then thought that he surely did not know enough, and he looked up into the wide expanse of heaven, into which they rose higher and higher as she flew with him on a dark cloud, while the storm

surged around them, the wind ringing in their ears like well-known old songs.

They flew over woods and lakes, over oceans and islands, the cold wind whistled down below them, the wolves howled, the black crows flew screaming over the sparkling snow, but up above, the moon shone bright and clear — and Kay looked at it all the long, long winter nights; in the day he slept at the Snow Queen's feet.

STORY THREE

THE GARDEN OF THE WOMAN LEARNED IN MAGIC

But how was little Gerda getting on all this long time since Kay left her? Where could he be? Nobody knew, nobody could say anything about him. All that the other boys knew was that they had seen him tie his little sledge to a splendid big one which drove away down the street and out of the town gates. Nobody knew where he was, and many tears were shed; little Gerda cried long and bitterly. At last, people said he was dead; he must have fallen into the river which ran close by the town. Oh, what long, dark, winter days those were!

At last the spring came and the sunshine.

“Kay is dead and gone,” said little Gerda.

“I don't believe it,” said the sunshine.

“He is dead and gone,” she said to the swallows.

“We don't believe it,” said the swallows, and at last little Gerda did not believe it either.

“I will put on my red shoes,” she said, one morning; “those Kay never saw; and then I will go down to the river and ask it about him!”

It was very early in the morning; she kissed the old grandmother, who was still asleep, put on the red shoes, and went quite alone out by the gate to the river.

“Is it true that you have taken my little playfellow? I

will give you my red shoes if you will bring him back to me again."

She thought the little ripples nodded in such a curious way, so she took off her red shoes, her most cherished possession, and threw them both into the river. They fell close by the shore, and were carried straight back to her by the little wavelets; it seemed as if the river would not accept her offering, as it had not taken little Kay.

She only thought she had not thrown them far enough, so she climbed into a boat which lay among the rushes, then she went right out to the farther end of it, and threw the shoes into the water again. But the boat was loose, and her movements started it off, and it floated away from the shore; she felt it moving and tried to get out, but before she reached the other end, the boat was more than a yard from the shore, and was floating away quite quickly.

Little Gerda was terribly frightened, and began to cry, but nobody heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her ashore, but they flew alongside twittering as if to cheer her, "We are here, we are here." The boat floated rapidly with the current; little Gerda sat quite still with only her stockings on; her little red shoes floated behind, but they could not catch up the boat, which drifted away faster and faster.

The banks on both sides were very pretty with beautiful flowers, fine old trees, and slopes dotted with sheep and cattle, but not a single person.

"Perhaps the river is taking me to little Kay," thought Gerda, and that cheered her; she sat up and looked at the beautiful green banks for hours.

Then they came to a big cherry garden; there was a little house in it, with curious blue and red windows, it had a thatched roof, and two wooden soldiers stood outside who presented arms as she sailed past. Gerda called out to them; she thought they were alive, but of course they did not answer;

she was quite close to them, for the current drove the boat close to the bank. Gerda called out again, louder than before, and then an old, old woman came out of the house; she was leaning upon a big, hooked stick, and she wore a big sun hat, which was covered with beautiful painted flowers.

“You poor little child,” said the old woman, “however were you driven out on this big, strong river into the wide, wide world alone?” Then she walked right into the water, and caught hold of the boat with her hooked stick; she drew it ashore and lifted little Gerda out.

Gerda was delighted to be on dry land again, but she was a little bit frightened of the strange old woman.

“Come, tell me who you are, and how you got here,” said she.

When Gerda had told her the whole story and asked her if she had seen Kay, the woman said she had not seen him, but that she expected him. Gerda must not be sad; she was to come and taste her cherries and see her flowers, which were more beautiful than any picture-book; each one had a story to tell. Then she took Gerda by the hand, they went into the little house, and the old woman locked the door.

The windows were very high up, and they were red, blue, and yellow; they threw a very curious light into the room. On the table were quantities of the most delicious cherries, of which Gerda had leave to eat as many as ever she liked. While she was eating, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, so that the hair curled, and shone like gold round the pretty little face, which was as sweet as a rose.

“I have long wanted a little girl like you!” said the old woman. “You will see how well we shall get on together.” While she combed her hair Gerda had forgotten all about Kay, for the old woman was learned in the magic art, but she was not a bad witch, she only cast spells over people for a little amusement, and she wanted to keep Gerda. She therefore went into the garden and waved her hooked stick

over all the rose bushes, and however beautifully they were flowering, all sank down into the rich black earth without leaving trace behind them. The old woman was afraid that if Gerda saw the roses she would be reminded of Kay, and would want to run away. Then she took Gerda into the flower garden. What a delicious scent there was! and every imaginable flower for every season was in that lovely garden; no picture book could be brighter or more beautiful. Gerda jumped for joy and played till the sun went down behind the tall cherry trees. Then she was put into a lovely bed with rose-coloured silken coverings stuffed with violets; she slept and dreamt as lovely dreams as any queen on her wedding day.

The next day she played with the flowers in the garden again — and many days passed in the same way. Gerda knew every flower, but however many there were, she always thought there was one missing, but which it was she did not know.

One day she was sitting looking at the old woman's sun hat with its painted flowers, and the very prettiest one of them all was a rose. The old woman had forgotten her hat when she charmed the others away. This is the consequence of being absent-minded.

“What!” said Gerda, “are there no roses here?” and she sprang in among the flower beds and sought, but in vain! Her hot tears fell on the very places where the roses used to be; when the warm drops moistened the earth, the rose trees shot up again just as full of bloom as when they sank. Gerda embraced the roses and kissed them, and then she thought of the lovely roses at home, and this brought the thought of little Kay.

“Oh, how I have been delayed,” said the little girl. “I ought to have been looking for Kay! Don't you know where he is?” she asked the roses. “Do you think he is dead and gone?”

“He is not dead,” said the roses. “For we have been

down underground, you know, and all the dead people are there, but Kay is not among them."

"Oh, thank you!" said little Gerda, and then she went to the other flowers and looked into their cups, and said, "Do you know where Kay is?"

But each flower stood in the sun and dreamt its own dreams. Little Gerda heard many of these, but never anything about Kay.

And what said the tiger lilies?

"Do you hear the drum? rub-a-dub—it has only two notes, rub-a-dub, always the same. The wailing of women and the cry of the preacher. The Hindu woman in her long red garment stands on the pile, while the flames surround her and her dead husband. But the woman is only thinking of the living man in the circle round, whose eyes burn with a fiercer fire than that of the flames which consume the body. Do the flames of the heart die in the fire?"

"I understand nothing about that," said little Gerda.

"That is my story," said the tiger lily.

"What does the convolvulus say?"

"An old castle is perched high over a narrow mountain path; it is closely covered with ivy, almost hiding the old red walls, and creeping up leaf upon leaf right round the balcony, where stands a beautiful maiden. She bends over the balustrade and looks eagerly up the road. No rose on its stem is fresher than she; no apple blossom wafted by the wind moves more lightly. Her silken robes rustle softly as she bends over and says, 'Will he never come?'"

"Is it Kay you mean?" asked Gerda.

"I am only talking about my own story, my dream," answered the convolvulus.

What said the little snowdrop?

"Between two trees a rope with a board is hanging; it is a swing. Two pretty little girls in snowy frocks and green ribbons fluttering on thier hats are seated on it. Their brother,

who is bigger than they are, stands up behind them; he has his arms round the ropes for supports, and holds in one hand a little bowl and in the other a clay pipe. He is blowing soap-bubbles. As the swing moves the bubbles fly upward in all their changing colours; the last one still hangs from the pipe swayed by the wind, and the swing goes on. A little black dog runs up, he is almost as light as the bubbles, he stands up on his hind legs and wants to be taken into the swing, but it does not stop. The little dog falls with an angry bark; they jeer at it; the bubble bursts. A swinging plank, a fluttering foam picture — that is my story!”

“I daresay what you tell me is very pretty, but you speak so sadly and you never mention little Kay.”

What says the hyacinth?

“They were three beautiful sisters, all most delicate, and quite transparent. One wore a crimson robe, the other a blue, and the third was pure white. These three danced hand-in-hand, by the edge of the lake in the moonlight. They were human beings, not fairies of the wood. The fragrant air attracted them, and they vanished into the wood; here the fragrance was stronger still. Three coffins glide out of the wood towards the lake, and in them lie the maidens. The fireflies flutter lightly round them with their little flickering torches. Do these dancing maidens sleep, or are they dead? The scent of the flowers says that they are corpses. The evening bell tolls their knell.”

“You make me quite sad,” said little Gerda. “Your perfume is so strong it makes me think of those dead maidens. Oh, is little Kay really dead? The roses have been down underground, and they say no.”

“Ding, dong,” tolled the hyacinth bells; “we are not tolling for little Kay; we know nothing about him. We sing our song, the only one we know.”

And Gerda went on to the buttercups shining among their dark green leaves.

“You are a bright little sun,” said Gerda. “Tell me if you know where I shall find my playfellow.”

The buttercup shone brightly and returned Gerda’s glance. What song could the buttercup sing? It would not be about Kay.

“God’s bright sun shone into a little court on the first day of spring. The sunbeams stole down the neighbouring white wall, close to which bloomed the first yellow flower of the season; it shone like burnished gold in the sun. An old woman had brought her armchair out into the sun; her granddaughter, a poor and pretty little maid-servant, had come to pay her a short visit, and she kissed her. There was gold, heart’s gold, in the kiss. Gold on the lips, gold on the ground, and gold above in the early morning beams! Now that is my little story,” said the buttercup.

“Oh, my poor old grandmother!” sighed Gerda. “She will be longing to see me, and grieving about me, as she did about Kay. But I shall soon go home again and take Kay with me. It is useless to ask the flowers about him. They only know their own stories, and have no information to give me.”

Then she tucked up her little dress, so that she might run the faster, but the narcissus blossoms struck her on the legs as she jumped over them, so she stopped and said, “Perhaps you can tell me something.”

She stooped down close to the flower and listened. What did it say?

“I can see myself, I can see myself,” said the narcissus. “Oh, how sweet is my scent. Up there in an attic window stands a little dancing girl half dressed; first she stands on one leg, then on the other, and looks as if she would tread the whole world under her feet. She is only a delusion. She pours some water out of a teapot on to a bit of stuff that she is holding; it is her bodice. ‘Cleanliness is a good thing,’ she says. Her white dress hangs on a peg; it has been washed

in the teapot, too, and dried on the roof. She puts it on, and wraps a saffron coloured scarf round her neck, which makes the dress look whiter. See how high she carries her head, and all upon one stem. I see myself, I see myself!"

"I don't care a bit about all that," said Gerda; "it's no use telling me such stuff."

And then she ran to the end of the garden. The door was fastened, but she pressed the rusty latch, and it gave way. The door sprang open, and little Gerda ran out with bare feet into the wide world. She looked back three times, but nobody came after her. At last she could run no farther, and she sat down on a big stone. When she looked round she saw that the summer was over, it was quite late autumn. She would never have known it inside the beautiful garden, where the sun always shone, and the flowers of every season were always in bloom.

"Oh, how I have wasted my time," said little Gerda. "It is autumn. I must not rest any longer," and she got up to go on.

Oh, how weary and sore were her little feet, and everything round looked so cold and dreary. The long willow leaves were quite yellow. The damp mist fell off the trees like rain, one leaf dropped after another from the trees, and only the sloe-thorn still bore its fruit, but the sloes were sour and set one's teeth on edge. Oh, how gray and sad it looked, out in the wide world.

FOURTH STORY

PRINCE AND PRINCESS

Gerda was soon obliged to rest again. A big crow hopped on to the snow, just in front of her. It had been sitting looking at her for a long time and wagging its head. Now it said, "Caw, caw; good-day, good-day," as well as it could; it meant to be kind to the little girl, and asked her where she was going, alone in the wide world.

Gerda understood the word "alone" and knew how much there was in it, and she told the crow the whole story of her life and adventures, and asked if it had seen Kay.

The crow nodded his head gravely and said, "Maybe I have, maybe I have."

"What, do you really think you have?" cried the little girl, nearly smothering him with her kisses.

"Gently, gently!" said the crow. "I believe it may have been Kay, but he has forgotten you by this time, I expect, for the Princess."

"Does he live with a Princess?" asked Gerda.

"Yes, listen," said the crow; "but it is so difficult to speak your language. If you understand 'crow's language,'¹ I can tell you about it much better."

"No, I have never learnt it," said Gerda; "but grandmother knew it, and used to speak it. If only I had learnt it!"

"It doesn't matter," said the crow. "I will tell you as well as I can, although I may do it rather badly."

Then he told her what he had heard.

"In this kingdom where we are now," said he, "there lives a Princess who is very clever. She has read all the newspapers in the world, and forgotten them again, so clever is she. One day she was sitting on her throne, which is not such an amusing thing to do either, they say; and she began humming a tune, which happened to be,

'Why should I not be married, oh, why?'

'Why not indeed?' said she. And she made up her mind to marry, if she could find a husband who had an answer ready when a question was put to him. She called all the court ladies together, and when they heard what she wanted, they were delighted.

¹Children have a kind of language, or gibberish, formed by adding letters or syllables to every word, which is called "crow's language."

“‘I like that now,’ they said. ‘I was thinking the same thing myself the other day.’”

“Every word I say is true,” said the crow, “for I have a tame sweetheart who goes about the palace whenever she likes. She told me the whole story.”

Of course his sweetheart was a crow, for “birds of a feather flock together,” and one crow always chooses another. “The newspapers all came out immediately with borders of hearts and the Princess’s initials. They gave notice that any young man who was handsome enough might go up to the Palace to speak to the Princess. The one who spoke as if he were quite at home, and spoke well, would be chosen by the Princess as her husband. Yes, yes, you may believe me, it’s as true as I sit here,” said the crow. “The people came crowding in; there was such running, and crushing, but no one was fortunate enough to be chosen, either on the first day, or on the second. They could all of them talk well enough in the street, but when they entered the castle gates, and saw the guard in silver uniforms, and when they went up the stairs through rows of lackeys in gold embroidered liveries, their courage forsook them. When they reached the brilliantly lighted reception rooms, and stood in front of the throne where the Princess was seated, they could think of nothing to say; they only echoed her last words, and of course that was not what she wanted.

“It was just as if they had all taken some kind of sleeping powder which made them lethargic; they did not recover themselves until they got out into the street again, and then they had plenty to say. There was quite a long line of them, reaching from the town gates up to the Palace.

“I went to see them myself,” said the crow. “They were hungry and thirsty, but they got nothing at the Palace, not even as much as a glass of tepid water. Some of the wise ones had taken sandwiches with them, but they did not share them with their neighbours; they thought if the others went

in to the Princess looking hungry, that there would be more chance for themselves."

"But Kay, little Kay!" asked Gerda; "when did he come? was he amongst the crowd?"

"Give me time, give me time! we are just coming to him. It was on the third day that a little personage came marching cheerfully along, without either carriage or horse. His eyes sparkled like yours, and he had beautiful long hair, but his clothes were very shabby."

"Oh, that was Kay!" said Gerda gleefully; "then I have found him!" and she clapped her hands.

"He had a little knapsack on his back!" said the crow.

"No, it must have been his sledge; he had it with him when he went away!" said Gerda.

"It may be so," said the crow; "I did not look very particularly, but I know from my sweetheart that when he entered the Palace gates, and saw the life guards in their silver uniforms and the lackeys on the stairs in their gold laced liveries, he was not the least bit abashed. He just nodded to them and said, 'It must be very tiresome to stand upon the stairs. I am going inside!' The rooms were blazing with lights. Privy councillors and excellencies without number were walking about barefoot carrying golden vessels; it was enough to make you solemn! His boots creaked fearfully, too, but he wasn't a bit upset."

"Oh, I am sure that was Kay," said Gerda. "I know he had a pair of new boots; I heard them creaking in grandmother's room."

"Yes, indeed, they did creak!" said the crow. "But nothing daunted, he went straight up to the Princess, who was sitting on a pearl as big as a spinning wheel. Poor, simple boy! all the court ladies and their attendants, the courtiers, and their gentlemen, each attended by a page, were standing round. The nearer the door they stood, so much the greater was their haughtiness; till the footman's boy, who always wore

slippers and stood in the doorway, was almost too proud even to be looked at."

"It must be awful!" said little Gerda, "and yet Kay has won the Princess.

"If I had not been a crow, I should have taken her myself, notwithstanding that I am engaged. They say he spoke as well as I could have done myself, when I speak crow-language; at least so my sweetheart says. He was a picture of good looks and gallantry, and, then, he had not come with any idea of wooing the Princess, but simply to hear her wisdom. He admired her just as much as she admired him!"

"Indeed it was Kay then," said Gerda; "he was so clever he could do mental arithmetic up to fractions. Oh, won't you take me to the Palace?"

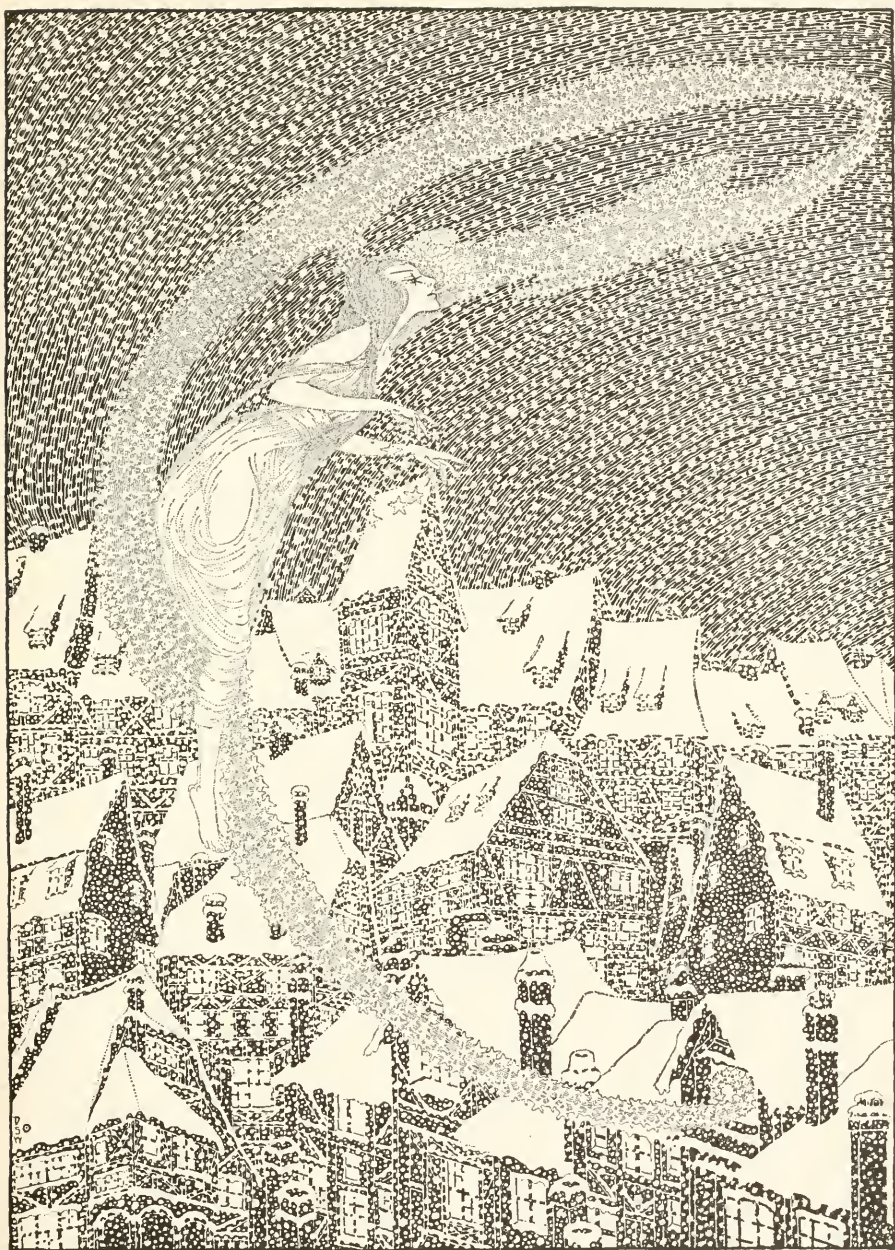
"It's easy enough to talk," said the crow; "but how are we to manage it! I will talk to my tame sweetheart about it; she will have some advice to give us, I dare say, but I am bound to tell you that a little girl like you will never be admitted!"

"Oh, indeed I shall," said Gerda; "when Kay hears that I am here, he will come out at once to fetch me."

"Wait here for me by the stile," said the crow; then he wagged his head and flew off.

The evening had darkened in before he came back. "Caw, caw," he said, "she sends you greeting, and here is a little roll for you; she got it out of the kitchen where there is bread enough, and I dare say you are hungry! It is not possible for you to get into the Palace—you have bare feet; the guards in silver and the lackeys in gold would never allow you to pass. But don't cry, we shall get you in somehow; my sweetheart knows a little back staircase which leads up to the bedroom, and she knows where the key is kept."

Then they went into the garden, into the great avenue where the leaves were, softly one by one; and when the Palace lights went out, one after the other, the crow led little Gerda to the back door, which was ajar.



The biggest snowflake became the figure of a woman. She was delicately lovely, but all ice, glittering, dazzling ice

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with fear and longing! It was just as if she was about to do something wrong, and yet she only wanted to know if this really was little Kay. Oh, it must be him, she thought, picturing to herself his clever eyes and his long hair. She could see his very smile when they used to sit under the rose trees, at home. She thought he would be very glad to see her, and to hear what a long way she had come to find him, and to hear how sad they had all been at home when he did not come back. Oh, it was joy mingled with fear.

They had now reached the stairs, where a little lamp was burning on a shelf. There stood the tame sweetheart, twisting and turning her head to look at Gerda, who made a curtsy, as grandmother had taught her.

"My betrothed has spoken so charmingly to me about you, my little miss!" she said; "your life, '*Vita*,' as it is called, is most touching! If you will take the lamp, I will go on in front. We shall take the straight road here, and we shall meet no one."

"It seems to me that some one is coming up behind us," said Gerda, as she fancied something rushed past her throwing a shadow on the walls: horses with flowing manes and slender legs; huntsmen, ladies and gentlemen on horseback.

"Oh, those are only the dreams!" said the crow; "they come to take the thoughts of the noble ladies and gentlemen out hunting. That's a good thing, for you will be able to see them all the better in bed. But don't forget, when you are taken into favour, that you show a grateful spirit."

"Now, there's no need to talk about that," said the crow from the woods.

They now came into the first apartment; it was hung with rose-coloured satin embroidered with flowers. Here again the dreams overtook them, but they flitted by so quickly that Gerda could not distinguish them. The apartments became one more beautiful than the other; they were enough to

bewilder anybody. They now reached the bedroom. The ceiling was like a great palm with crystal leaves, and in the middle of the room two beds, each like a lily hung from a golden stem. One was white, and in it lay the Princess; the other was red, and there lay he whom Gerda had come to seek — little Kay! She bent aside one of the crimson leaves, and she saw a little brown neck. It was Kay! She called his name aloud, and held the lamp close to him. Again the dreams rushed through the room on horseback — he awoke, turned his head — and it was not little Kay.

It was only the Prince's neck which was like his; but he was young and handsome. The Princess peeped out of her lily-white bed, and asked what was the matter. Then little Gerda cried and told them all her story, and what the crows had done to help her.

"You poor little thing!" said the Prince and Princess. And they praised the crows, and said that they were not at all angry with them, but they must not do it again. Then they gave them a reward.

"Would you like your liberty?" said the Princess, "or would you prefer permanent posts about the court as court crows with perquisites from the kitchen?"

Both crows curtsied and begged for the permanent posts, for they thought of their old age, and said, "It was so good to have something for the old man," as they called it.

The Prince got up and allowed Gerda to sleep in his bed, and he could not have done more. She folded her little hands, and thought "how good the people and the animals are"; then she shut her eyes and fell fast asleep. All the dreams came flying back again; this time they looked like angels, and they were dragging a little sledge with Kay sitting on it, and he nodded. But it was only a dream; so it all vanished when she awoke.

Next day she was dressed in silk and velvet from head to foot; they asked her to stay at the Palace and have a good

time, but she only begged them to give her a little carriage and horse, and a little pair of boots, so that she might drive out into the wide world to look for Kay.

They gave her a pair of boots and a muff. She was beautifully dressed, and when she was ready to start, there before the door stood a new chariot of pure gold. The Prince's and Princess's coat of arms was emblazoned on it, and shone like a star. Coachman, footman, and outrider, for there was even an outrider, all wore golden crowns. The Prince and Princess themselves helped her into the carriage and wished her joy. The wood crow, who was now married, accompanied her for the first three miles; he sat beside Gerda, for he could not ride with his back to the horses; the other crow stood at the door and flapped her wings; she did not go with them, for she suffered from headaches since she had been a kitchen pensioner — the consequence of eating too much. The chariot was stored with sugar biscuits and there were fruit and ginger nuts under the seat. "Good-bye, good-bye," cried the Prince and Princess; little Gerda wept and the crow wept too. At the end of the first few miles the crow said good-bye, and this was the hardest parting of all. It flew up into a tree, and flapped its big black wings as long as it could see the chariot, which shone like the brightest sunshine.

FIFTH STORY

THE LITTLE ROBBER GIRL

They drove on through a dark wood, where the chariot lighted up the way and blinded the robbers by its glare; it was more than they could bear.

"It is gold, it is gold!" they cried, and darting forward, seized the horses, and killed the postilions, the coachman and footman. Then they dragged little Gerda out of the carriage.

"She is fat, and she is pretty, she has been fattened on

nuts!" said the old robber woman, who had a long beard, and eyebrows that hung down over her eyes. "She is as good as a fat lamb, and how nice she will taste!" She drew out her sharp knife, as she said this; it glittered horribly. "Oh!" screamed the old woman at the same moment, for her little daughter had come up behind her, and she was biting her ear. She hung on her back, as wild and as savage a little animal as you could wish to find. "You bad, wicked child!" said the mother, but she was prevented from killing Gerda on this occasion.

"She shall play with me," said the little robber girl; "she shall give me her muff, and her pretty dress, and she shall sleep in my bed." Then she bit her mother again and made her dance. All the robbers laughed and said, "Look at her dancing with her cub!"

"I want to get into the carriage," said the little robber girl, and she always had her own way because she was so spoilt and stubborn. She and Gerda got into the carriage and then they drove over stubble and stones farther and farther into the wood. The little robber girl was as big as Gerda, but much stronger; she had broader shoulders and darker skin, her eyes were quite black, with almost a melancholy expression. She put her arm around Gerda's waist and said:

"They shan't kill you as long as I don't get angry with you; you must surely be a Princess!"

"No," said little Gerda, and then she told her all her adventures, and how fond she was of Kay.

The robber girl looked earnestly at her, gave a little nod and said, "They shan't kill you even if I am angry with you; I will do it myself." Then she dried Gerda's eyes, and stuck her own hands into the pretty muff, which was so soft and warm.

At last the chariot stopped; they were in the courtyard of a robber's castle, the walls of which were cracked from top to bottom. Ravens and crows flew in and out of every hole, and big bulldogs, which each looked ready to devour some-

body, jumped about as high as they could, but they did not bark, for it was not allowed. A big fire was burning in the middle of the stone floor of the smoky old hall. The smoke all went up to the ceiling, where it had to find a way out for itself. Soup was boiling in a big cauldron over the fire, and hares and rabbits were roasting on the spits.

“You shall sleep with me and all my little pets to-night,” said the robber girl.

When they had had something to eat and drink they went along to one corner which was spread with straw and rugs. There were nearly a hundred pigeons roosting overhead on the rafters and beams. They seemed to be asleep, but they fluttered about a little when the children came in.

“They are all mine,” said the little robber girl, seizing one of the nearest. She held it by the legs and shook it till it flapped its wings. “Kiss it!” she cried, dashing it at Gerda’s face. “Those are the wood pigeons,” she added, pointing to some laths fixed across a big hole high up on the walls; “they are a regular rabble; they would fly away directly if they were not locked in. And here is my old sweetheart Be,” dragging forward a reindeer by the horn; it was tied up, and it had a bright copper ring round its neck. “We have to keep him close, too, or he would run off. Every single night I tickle his neck with my bright knife, he is so frightened of it.” The little girl produced a long knife out of a hole in the wall and drew it across the reindeer’s neck. The poor animal laughed and kicked, and the robber girl laughed and pulled Gerda down into the bed with her.

“Do you have that knife by you while you are asleep?” asked Gerda, looking rather frightened.

“I always sleep with a knife,” said the little robber girl. “You never know what will happen. But now tell me again what you told me before about little Kay, and why you went out into the world.” So Gerda told her all about it again, and the wood pigeons cooed up in their cage above them;

the other pigeons were asleep. The little robber girl put her arm round Gerda's neck and went to sleep with the knife in her other hand, and she was soon snoring. But Gerda would not close her eyes; she did not know whether she was to live or to die. The robbers sat round the fire, eating and drinking, and the old woman was turning somersaults. This sight terrified the poor little girl. Then the wood pigeons said, "Coo, coo, we have seen little Kay; his sledge was drawn by a white chicken and he was sitting in the Snow Queen's sledge; it was floating low down over the trees while we were in our nests. She blew upon us young ones, and they all died except we two; coo, coo."

"What are you saying up there?" asked Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything about it?"

"She was most likely going to Lapland, because there is always snow and ice there! Ask the reindeer who is tied up there."

"There is ice and snow, and it's a splendid place," said the reindeer. "You can run and jump about where you like on those big glittering plains. The Snow Queen has her summer tent there, but her permanent castle is up at the North Pole, on the island which is called Spitzbergen!"

"Oh, Kay, little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"Lie still, or I shall stick the knife into you!" said the robber girl.

In the morning Gerda told her all that the wood pigeons had said, and the little robber girl looked quite solemn, but she nodded her head and said, "No matter, no matter! Do you know where Lapland is?" she asked the reindeer.

"Who should know better than I," said the animal, its eyes dancing. "I was born and brought up there, and I used to leap about on the snow-fields."

"Listen," said the robber girl. "You see that all our men folks are away, but mother is still here, and she will stay; but later on in the morning she will take a drink out of the

big bottle there, and after that she will have a nap — then I will do something for you.” Then she jumped out of bed, ran along to her mother and pulled her beard, and said: “Good morning, my own dear nanny-goat!” And her mother filiped her nose till it was red and blue; but it was all affection.

As soon as her mother had had her draught from the bottle and had dropped asleep, the little robber girl went along to the reindeer, and said: “I should have the greatest pleasure in the world in keeping you here, to tickle you with my knife, because you are such fun then; however, it does not matter. I will untie your halter and help you outside so that you may run away to Lapland, but you must put your best foot foremost, and take this little girl for me to the Snow Queen’s palace where her playfellow is. I have no doubt you heard what she was telling me, for she spoke loud enough, and you are generally eavesdropping!”

The reindeer jumped into the air for joy. The robber girl lifted little Gerda up, and had the forethought to tie her on, nay, even to give her a little cushion to sit upon. “Here, after all, I will give you your fur boots back, for it will be very cold, but I will keep your muff, it is too pretty to part with. Still you shan’t be cold. Here are my mother’s big mittens for you; they will reach up to your elbows; here, stick your hands in! Now your hands look just like my nasty mother’s!”

Gerda shed tears of joy.

“I don’t like you to whimper!” said the little robber girl. “You ought to be looking delighted; and here are two loaves and a ham for you, so that you shan’t starve.”

These things were tied on to the back of the reindeer; the little robber girl opened the door, called in all the big dogs, and then she cut the halter with her knife, and said to the reindeer, “Now run, but take care of my little girl!”

Gerda stretched out her hands in the big mittens to the robber girl and said good-bye; and then the reindeer darted off over briars and bushes, through the big wood, over swamps

and plains, as fast as it could go. The wolves howled and the ravens screamed, while the red lights quivered up in the sky.

“There are my old northern lights,” said the reindeer; “see how they flash!” and on it rushed faster than ever, day and night. The loaves were eaten, and the ham too, and then they were in Lapland.

SIXTH STORY

THE LAPP WOMAN AND THE FINN WOMAN

They stopped by a little hut, a very poverty-stricken one; the roof sloped right down to the ground, and the door was so low that the people had to creep on hands and knees when they wanted to go in or out. There was nobody at home here but an old Lapp woman, who was frying fish over a train-oil lamp. The reindeer told her all Gerda's story, but it told its own first; for it thought it was much the most important. Gerda was so overcome by the cold that she could not speak at all.

“Oh, you poor creatures!” said the Lapp woman; “you've got a long way to go yet; you will have to go hundreds of miles into Finmark, for the Snow Queen is paying a country visit there, and she burns blue lights every night. I will write a few words on a dried stock-fish, for I have no paper. I will give it to you to take to the Finn woman up there. She will be better able to direct you than I can.”

So when Gerda was warmed, and had eaten and drunk something, the Lapp woman wrote a few words on a dried stock-fish and gave it to her, bidding her take good care of it. Then she tied her on to the reindeer again, and off they flew. Flicker, flicker, went the beautiful blue northern lights up in the sky all night long — at last they came to Finmark, and knocked on the Finn woman's chimney, for she had no door at all.



An old, old woman came out of the house . . . she wore a big sun hat which was covered with beautiful painted flowers

There was such a heat inside that the Finn woman went about almost naked; she was little and very grubby. She at once loosened Gerda's things, and took off the mittens and the boots, or she would have been too hot. Then she put a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and after that she read what was written on the stock-fish. She read it three times, and then she knew it by heart, and put the fish into the pot for dinner; there was no reason why it should not be eaten, and she never wasted anything.

Again the reindeer told his own story first, and then little Gerda's. The Finn woman blinked with her wise eyes, but she said nothing.

"You are so clever," said the reindeer, "I know you can bind all the winds of the world with a bit of sewing cotton. When a skipper unties one knot he gets a good wind, when he unties two it blows hard, and if he undoes the third and the fourth he brings a storm about his head wild enough to blow down the forest trees. Won't you give the little girl a drink, so that she may have the strength of twelve men to overcome the Snow Queen?"

"The strength of twelve men," said the Finn woman. "Yes, that will be about enough."

She went along to a shelf and took down a big folded skin, which she unrolled. There were curious characters written on it, and the Finn woman read till the perspiration poured down her forehead.

But the reindeer again implored her to give Gerda something, and Gerda looked at her with such beseeching eyes, full of tears, that the Finn woman began blinking again, and drew the reindeer along into a corner, where she whispered to it, at the same time putting fresh ice on its head.

"Little Kay is certainly with the Snow Queen, and he is delighted with everything there. He thinks it is the best place in the world, but that is because he has got a splinter of glass in his heart and a grain of glass in his eye. They

will have to come out first, or he will never be human again, and the Snow Queen will keep him in her power!"

"But can't you give little Gerda something to take which will give her power to conquer it all?"

"I can't give her greater power than she already has. Don't you see how great it is? Don't you see how both man and beast have to serve her? How she has got on as well as she has on her bare feet? We must not tell her what power she has; it is in her heart, because she is such a sweet, innocent child. If she can't reach the Snow Queen herself, then we can't help her. The Snow Queen's gardens begin just two miles from here; you can carry the little girl as far as that. Put her down by the big bush standing there in the snow covered with red berries. Don't stand gossiping, but hurry back to me!" Then the Finn woman lifted Gerda onto the reindeer's back, and it rushed off as hard as it could.

"Oh, I have not got my boots, and I have not got my mittens!" cried little Gerda.

She soon felt the want of them in that cutting wind, but the reindeer did not dare to stop. It ran on till it came to the bush with the red berries. There it put Gerda down and kissed her on the mouth, while big shining tears trickled down its face. Then it ran back again as fast as ever it could. There stood poor little Gerda, without shoes or gloves, in the middle of freezing, icebound Finmark.

She ran forward as quickly as she could. A whole regiment of snowflakes came toward her; they did not fall from the sky, for it was quite clear, with the northern lights shining brightly. No; these snowflakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the bigger they grew. Gerda remembered well how big and ingenious they looked under the magnifying glass. But the size of these was monstrous, they were alive, they were the Snow Queen's advanced guard, and they took the most curious shapes. Some looked like big, horrid porcupines, some like bundles of knotted snakes with their heads

sticking out. Others, again, were like fat little bears with bristling hair, but all were dazzling white and living snowflakes.

Then little Gerda said the Lord's Prayer, and the cold was so great that her breath froze as it came out of her mouth, and she could see it like a cloud of smoke in front of her. It grew thicker and thicker, till it formed itself into bright little angels who grew bigger and bigger when they touched the ground. They all wore helmets and carried shields and spears in their hands. More and more of them appeared, and when Gerda had finished her prayer she was surrounded by a whole legion. They pierced the snowflakes with their spears and shivered them into a hundred pieces, and little Gerda walked fearlessly and undauntedly through them. The angels touched her hands and her feet, and then she hardly felt how cold it was, but walked quickly on toward the Palace of the Snow Queen.

Now we must see what Kay was about. He was not thinking about Gerda at all, least of all that she was just outside the Palace.

SEVENTH STORY

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SNOW QUEEN'S PALACE AND AFTERWARD

The Palace walls were made of drifted snow, and the windows and doors of the biting winds. There were over a hundred rooms in it, shaped just as the snow had drifted. The biggest one stretched for many miles. They were all lighted by the strongest northern lights. All the rooms were immensely big and empty, and glittering in their iciness. There was never any gaiety in them; not even so much as a ball for the little bears, when the storms might have turned up as the orchestra, and the polar bears might have walked about on their hind legs and shown off their grand manners. There was never even a little game-playing party for such games as "touch last" or "the biter bit" — no, not even a little gossip over the coffee cups for the white fox misses. Immense, vast,

and cold were the Snow Queen's halls. The northern lights came and went with such regularity that you could count the seconds between their coming and going. In the midst of these never-ending snowballs was a frozen lake. It was broken up on the surface into a thousand bits, but each piece was so exactly like the others that the whole formed a perfect work of art. The Snow Queen sat in the very middle of it when she sat at home. She then said that she was sitting on "The Mirror of Reason," and that it was the best and only one in the world.

Little Kay was blue with cold, nay, almost black; but he did not know it, for the Snow Queen had kissed away the icy shiverings, and his heart was little better than a lump of ice. He went about dragging some sharp, flat pieces of ice, which he placed in all sorts of patterns, trying to make something out of them; just as when we at home have little tablets of wood, with which we make patterns, and call them a "Chinese puzzle."

Kay's patterns were most ingenious, because they were the "Ice Puzzles of Reason." In his eyes they were first rate and of the greatest importance: this was because of the grain of glass still in his eye. He made many patterns forming words, but he never could find out the right way to place them for one particular word, a word he was most anxious to make. It was "Eternity." The Snow Queen had said to him that if he could find out this word he should be his own master, and she would give him the whole world and a new pair of skates. But he could not discover it.

"Now I am going to fly away to the warm countries," said the Snow Queen. "I want to go and peep into the black cauldrons!" She meant the volcanoes Etna and Vesuvius by this. "I must whiten them a little; it does them good, and the lemons and the grapes too!" And away she flew.

Kay sat quite alone in all those many miles of empty ice halls. He looked at his bits of ice, and thought and thought,



She then said that she was sitting on "The Mirror of Reason,"
and that it was the best and only one in the world

till something gave way within him. He sat so stiff and immovable that one might have thought he was frozen to death.

Then it was that little Gerda walked into the Palace, through the great gates, in a biting wind. She said her evening prayer, and the wind dropped as if lulled to sleep, and she walked on into the big empty hall. She saw Kay, and knew him at once; she flung her arms round his neck, held him fast, and cried, "Kay, little Kay, have I found you at last?"

But he sat still, rigid and cold.

Then little Gerda shed hot tears; they fell upon his breast and penetrated to his heart. Here they thawed the lump of ice, and melted the little bit of the mirror which was in it. He looked at her, and she sang:

"Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!"

Then Kay burst into tears; he cried so much that the grain of glass was washed out of his eye. He knew her, and shouted with joy, "Gerda, dear little Gerda! where have you been for such a long time? And where have I been?" He looked round and said, "How cold it is here; how empty and vast!" He kept tight hold of Gerda, who laughed and cried for joy. Their happiness was so heavenly that even the bits of ice danced for joy around them; and when they settled down, there they lay, just in the very position the Snow Queen had told Kay he must find out, if he was to become his own master and have the whole world and a new pair of skates.

Gerda kissed his cheeks and they grew rose, she kissed his eyes and they shone like hers, she kissed his hands and his feet, and he became well and strong. The Snow Queen might come home whenever she liked, his order of release was written there in shining letters of ice.

They took hold of each other's hands and wandered out of the big place. They talked about grandmother, and about the roses on the roof. Wherever they went the winds lay

still and the sun broke through the clouds. When they reached the bush with the red berries they found the reindeer waiting for them, and he had brought another young reindeer with him, whose udders were full. The children drank her warm milk and kissed her on the mouth. Then they carried Kay and Gerda, first to the Finn woman, in whose heated hut they warmed themselves and received directions about the homeward journey. Then they went on to the Lapp woman; she had made new clothes for them and prepared her sledge. Both the reindeer ran by their side, to the boundaries of the country; here the first green buds appeared, and they said "Good-bye" to the reindeer and the Lapp woman. They heard the first little birds twittering and saw the buds in the forest. Out of it came riding a young girl on a beautiful horse, which Gerda knew, for it had drawn the golden chariot. She had a scarlet cap on her head and pistols in her belt; it was the little robber girl, who was tired of being at home. She was riding northward to see how she liked it before she tried some other part of the world. She knew them again, and Gerda recognized her with delight.

"You are a nice fellow to go tramping off!" she said to little Kay. "I should like to know if you deserve to have somebody running to the end of the world for your sake!"

But Gerda patted her cheek, and asked about the Prince and Princess.

"They are travelling in foreign countries," said the robber girl.

"But the crow?" asked Gerda.

"Oh, the crow is dead!" she answered. "The tame sweetheart is a widow, and goes about with a bit of black wool tied round her leg. She pities herself bitterly, but it's all nonsense! But tell me how you got on yourself, and where you found him."

Gerda and Kay both told her all about it.

"Snip, snap, snurre, it's all right at last then!" she said and she took hold of their hands and promised that if she

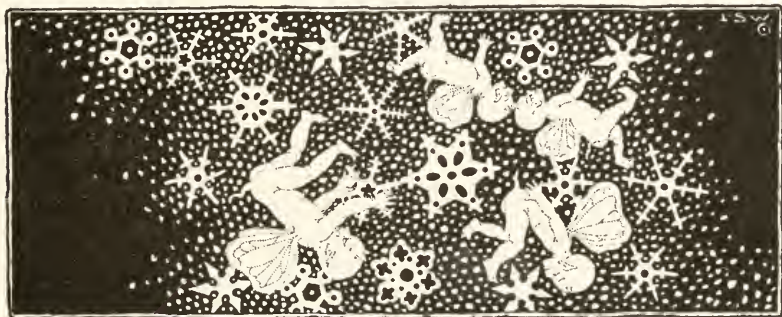
ever passed through their town she would pay them a visit. Then she rode off into the wide world. But Kay and Gerda walked on, hand in hand, and wherever they went they found the most delightful spring and blooming flowers. Soon they recognized the big town where they lived, with its tall towers, in which the bells still rang their merry peals. They went straight on to grandmother's door, up the stairs and into her room. Everything was just as they had left it, and the old clock ticked in the corner, and the hands pointed to the time. As they went through the door into the room they perceived that they were grown up. The roses clustered round the open window, and there stood their two little chairs. Kay and Gerda sat down upon them still holding each other by the hand. All the cold empty grandeur of the Snow Queen's palace had passed from their memory like a bad dream. Grandmother sat in God's warm sunshine reading from her Bible.

“Without ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Kay and Gerda looked into each other's eyes and then all at once the meaning of the old hymn came to them.

“Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!”

And there they both sat, grown up and yet children — children at heart; and it was summer — warm, beautiful summer.





IT IS very extraordinary, but when my feelings are most fervent, and at their best, my tongue and my hands alike seem tied. I cannot reproduce my impressions either in words, or in painting, as I feel them burning within me. And yet I am an artist, my eye tells me so, and all who have seen my sketches and notes acknowledge the same.

I am only a poor lad, and I live in one of the narrowest streets; but light is not wanting to me, for I live high up, and I have a fine view over the roof. For the first few days when I came to live in the town, it seemed very cramped and lonely. Instead of green woods and hills, I only had chimney pots on my horizon. I had not a single friend, and there was not even the face of an acquaintance to greet me.

One evening I was standing sadly by the window. I opened it and looked out, and there, how pleased I was! I saw a face I knew, a round friendly face, my best friend at home. It was the moon, the dear old moon, unchanged, and looking exactly the same as he used to look when he peeped

at me there through the willows in the marshes. I kissed my hand to him, and he shone straight into my room and promised to look in at me every evening he was out. This promise he has faithfully kept, and it is only a pity that he stays so short a time. Every time he comes he tells me something or another which he has seen the night before.

“Now paint what I tell you!” said he, “and you will have a very fine picture book.” I have done as he said for many evenings, and in my own way I could give a new rendering of the “Thousand and One Nights,” but that would be too many. Those I give here are not selected, but they come in the order in which I heard them. A highly gifted painter, a poet or a musician might perhaps make more of them; what I have given here are only hasty sketches, with my own thoughts occasionally interspersed, for the moon did not come every night; there were some evenings when he was hidden by the clouds.

FIRST EVENING

“Last evening,” to give the moon’s own words, “as I was gliding through the clear atmosphere of India, and reflecting myself in the Ganges, I tried to pierce the thick groves of plantain trees the leaves of which overlap each other as tightly as the horny plates on the back of the turtle. From out of the thicket came a Hindu maiden; she was as light as a gazelle, and as beautiful as Eve. There was such an airy grace about her, and yet such firmness of purpose in this daughter of India; I could read her intention in coming. The thorny creepers tore her sandals, but she stepped rapidly onward. The deer coming up from the river where they had quenched their thirst, bounded shyly past her, for the girl held in her hand a burning lamp. I could see the blood coursing in her delicate fingers as she bent them round the flame to form a shelter for it. She approached the river and placed the lamp upon the face of the waters, and it floated away on the stream.

The flame flickered and seemed as if it would go out, but still it burned, and the dark sparkling eyes of the girl followed it with a longing glance, from under their silken fringes. She knew that if the lamp burned as long as she could follow it with her eyes, her lover lived. But if it went out, he was dead. The lamp burnt and flickered, and her heart burnt and trembled. She sank upon her knees in prayer. By her side in the grass lay a venomous snake, but she heeded it not; she only thought of Brahma, and her bridegroom. 'He lives!' she rejoiced, and from the hills came the echo, 'He lives!'"

SECOND EVENING

"It was yesterday," the moon told me, "I peeped down into a little court surrounded by houses; in it sat a hen with eleven chickens. A charming little girl was skipping about among them. The hen clucked and spread her wings in alarm over her brood. Then the little girl's father came out and scolded her, and I slipped away without thinking any more about it. But to-night, only a few minutes ago, I looked into the same court. At first it was quite quiet, but then the same little girl came out. She crept softly along to the chicken house, lifted the latch and slipped in beside the hen and chickens. They cackled and flapped their wings and the little girl ran after them. I saw it all quite plainly, for I peeped in by a hole in the wall. I was quite angry with the naughty child, and felt pleased when her father came and scolded her, more angrily than yesterday. He took her by the arm, and she bent back her head, showing her big blue eyes full of tears. 'What are you doing here?' asked he.

"She cried and said, 'I only wanted to get into the hen to kiss her, and to ask her to forgive me for frightening her yesterday, but I was afraid to tell you.'

"The father kissed the sweet innocent upon the forehead and I kissed her on the eyes and lips."

THIRD EVENING

“In the narrow street close by — it is so narrow that I can only let my beams glide down for a few minutes, but in those minutes I see enough to know what the people are who move about there — I saw a woman sixteen years ago; she was a child; away in the country she played in the old vicarage garden. The rose hedges were old and past flowering. They were running wild over the paths and sending up long shoots into the apple trees. Here and there grew one poor rose, not lovely as the queen of flowers should be, but the colour was there, and the fragrance. The parson’s little daughter seemed to me a far sweeter flower, sitting upon her footstool under the wild hedge, kissing the battered cheeks of her doll. Ten years later I saw her again. I saw her in a brilliant ballroom; she was the lovely bride of a rich merchant. I was delighted with her happiness, and I often sought her in those quiet evenings. Alas! no one thought of my clear eye or my sharp glances. My rose was also sending out wild shoots like the roses in the vicarage garden. There are tragedies in everyday life too. To-night I saw the last act. There, in the narrow street, on a bed, she lay at death’s door. The wicked landlord, rough and cruel, her only protector, tore aside the coverlet. ‘Get up!’ he said. ‘Your face is a sight. Dress yourself up, paint your face, and get some money, or I will turn you into the street. Get up at once!’ ‘Death is in my heart!’ she said. ‘Oh, let me rest!’ But he forced her to get up, and painted her cheeks, and put a wreath of roses in her hair. Then he seated her by the window, with the light close by, and left her. I gazed upon her as she sat motionless, with her hands in her lap. The window flew back, and one of the panes cracked, but she did not move. The curtain fluttered round her like a flame. She was dead.

“The dead woman at the open window preached a moral to me: My rose from the vicarage garden.”

FOURTH EVENING

“I went to a German play last night,” said the moon. “It was in a little town; a stable had been turned into a theatre, that is to say, the stalls were left standing and furnished up to make boxes. All the woodwork was covered up with bright paper. A little iron chandelier hung from the low ceiling, and so that it might disappear into the roof, as in a big theatre, at the sound of the prompter’s bell, an inverted tub was fixed above it. ‘Ring-a-ting’ went the bell; and the little chandelier made a spring of about a foot, and then one knew that the play had begun. A young prince and his consort, who were travelling through the town, were present at the performance. The house was crammed; only the place under the chandelier was left like a little crater; not a creature sat there, for the grease dropped. ‘Drop, drop.’ I saw it all, for it was so warm that all the loopholes had been opened. The lads and lasses outside were peeping in, notwithstanding that the police inside kept threatening them with their sticks. The noble pair sat in a couple of old arm-chairs close to the orchestra. The burgo-master and his wife usually occupied these, but on this occasion they were obliged to sit on the wooden benches, just as if they had been ordinary citizens. ‘There, you see there is rank above rank!’ was the quiet remark of the goodwives; and this incident gave a special air of festivity to the entertainment. The chandelier gave its little hops; the crowd was rapped over the knuckles, and I — Yes, the moon saw the whole entertainment.”

FIFTH EVENING

“Yesterday,” said the moon, “I looked down upon the life of Paris, and my eye penetrated to some of the apartments in the Louvre. An old grandmother, poorly clad, belonging to the lower classes, accompanied by some of the subordinate attendants, entered the great empty throne room. She wanted

to see it, she must see it! It had cost her many small sacrifices and much persuasiveness before she had attained her wish. She folded her thin hands and looked about her as reverently as if she were in a church. 'It was here,' she said, 'here,' and she approached the throne with its rich embroidered velvet hangings. 'There!' she said, 'there!' and she fell upon her knees and kissed the purple carpet; I believe she wept. 'It was not this very velvet,' said the attendant, a smile playing round his mouth. 'But it was here!' said the woman, 'it looked the same.' 'The same,' he answered, 'yet not the same; the windows were smashed to atoms, the doors torn off, and there was blood upon the floors!' 'But still you may say that my grandson died upon the throne of France. Died!' repeated the old woman. I don't think anything more was said; they left the room soon after. The twilight faded, and my light grew stronger upon the rich velvet on the throne of France. Who do you think the old woman was? I will tell you a story. It was evening on the most brilliant day of victory in the July revolution, when every house was a fortress, every window an embrasure. The populace stormed the Tuileries, even women and children fought among the combatants; they pressed through the apartments of the palace. A poor, half-grown lad in rags fought bravely among the other insurgents; he fell, fatally wounded by bayonet thrusts, and sank to the ground in the throne room itself, and his bleeding form was laid upon the throne, where his blood streamed over the imperial purple! What a picture that was! The noble room, the struggling groups, a torn banner upon the ground, the tricolour floating from the bayonets; and on the throne the poor dying boy with his pale transparent face and eyes turned toward heaven, while his limbs were already stiffening in death. His naked breast and torn clothing were half hidden by the purple velvet decked with the lilies of France. It had been prophesied at his cradle that 'he should die on the throne of France.' The mother's heart had dreamt of a new Napoleon. My beams

have kissed the wreath of Immortelles on the lad's grave, and this night they kissed the forehead of the old grandmother while she dreamt and saw the picture you may sketch here, 'The poor boy upon the throne of France!'"

SIXTH EVENING

"I have been in Upsala," said the moon. "I looked down upon the great plain covered with coarse grass and the barren fields. I looked at myself in the waters of the Fyris river, while the steamers frightened the fishes in among the rushes. The clouds chased each other below me, and threw their shadows on to Odin's, Thor's, and Freya's graves, as they are called. Names have been cut all over the mounds in the short turf. There is no monument here, where travellers can have their names carved, nor rock walls where they may be painted, so the visitors have had the turf cut away, and their names stand out in the bare earth. There is a perfect network of these spread all over the mounds. A form of immortality which only lasts till the fresh grass grows. A man was standing there, a poet. He emptied the mead horn with its broad silver rim and whispered a name, telling the wind not to betray it; but I heard it and knew it. A count's coronet sparkles over it, and therefore he did not speak it aloud. I smiled; a poet's crown sparkles over his! Eleanora d'Este's nobility gains lustre from Tasso's name. I knew, too, where this Rose of Beauty blooms!" Having said this the moon was hidden by a cloud. May no clouds come between the poet and his rose!

SEVENTH EVENING

"Along the shore stretches a great forest of oak and beech; sweet and fragrant is its scent. It is visited every year by hundreds of nightingales. The sea is close by, the ever-changing sea, and the broad high-road separates the two. One carriage

after another rolls by; I do not follow them; my eye rather rests on one particular spot. It is a tumulus, or barrow; brambles and wild sloes grow among its stones. Here is real poetry in nature. How do you think people in general interpret it? I will tell you what I heard only last night.

“First two rich farmers drove by. ‘There are some fine trees,’ said one. ‘There are ten loads of wood in each,’ answered the other. ‘This will be a hard winter, and last winter we got fourteen dollars a cord,’ and they were gone. ‘This is a bad bit of road,’ said the next man who drove along. ‘It’s those cursed trees,’ answered his companion. ‘You don’t get a current of air, you only have the breeze from the sea,’ and then they rolled by. Next, the diligence came along. The passengers were all asleep at the prettiest part of the road. The driver blew his horn; he only thought ‘How well I am blowing it, and it sounds well here. I wonder what they think of it,’ and then the diligence, too, was gone. The next to pass were two lads on horseback. Here we have youth and champagne in the blood, I thought. And, indeed, they looked with a smile at the moss-grown hill and the dark thicket. ‘Shouldn’t I like a walk here with the miller’s Christine!’ said one, and then they rushed on. The flowers scented the air, and every breeze was hushed; it looked as if the sea was a part of the heavens outspread over a deep valley. A carriage drove by in which were six travellers; four of them were asleep; the fifth was thinking of his new summer coat, and whether it became him. The sixth leant forward and asked the driver if there was anything remarkable about that heap of stones. ‘No,’ answered the man, ‘it’s only a heap of stones; but those trees are remarkable. ‘Tell me about them.’ ‘Well, they are very remarkable; you see, sir, in winter when the snow lies deep, and every place looks alike, these trees are a landmark to me, and I know I must keep close to them so as not to drive into the sea. In that way, you see, they are remarkable:’ then he drove on. Now an artist came along and his eyes sparkled; he did not say

a word, but he whistled and the nightingales sang, the one louder than the other. 'Hold your tongues,' he cried, and took out his note-book and began noting down the colours in the most methodical manner, 'Blue, lilac, dark brown. It will make a splendid picture.' He saw it as a mirror reflects a scene, and in the meantime he whistled a march by Rossini. The last to come by was a poor girl; she rested a moment by the barrow and put down her burden. She turned her pale pretty face toward the wood and her eyes shone when she looked upward to the sky over the sea. She folded her hands and I think she whispered a prayer. She did not herself understand the feelings which penetrated her, but I know that in years to come this night will often recur to her with all the lovely scene around her. It will be much more beautiful and truer to nature in her memory than the painter's picture will be with his exact colouring noted down in a book. My beams followed her till the dawn kissed her forehead."

EIGHTH EVENING

There were heavy clouds in the sky, and the moon did not appear at all. I was doubly lonely in my little room, looking up into the sky where the moon ought to have been. My thoughts wandered up to the kind friend who had told me stories every evening and shown me pictures. What had he not experienced? He had sailed over the angry waters of the flood and looked down upon the ark, as he now did upon me, bringing consolation to the new world which was to arise. When the children of Israel stood weeping by the waters of Babylon, he peeped sadly through the willows where their harps were hung. When Romeo climbed on to the balcony and young love's kiss flew like a cherub's thought from earth to heaven, the round moon was hidden behind the dark cypresses in the transparent air. He saw the hero at St. Helena where he stood on the rock gazing out over the illimitable ocean,

while great thoughts stirred his breast. Nay, what could not the moon tell us? The life of the world is a story to him. To-night I do not see you, old friend! and I have no picture to draw in remembrance of your visit. But as I looked dreamily up at the clouds, there appeared one beam from the moon — but it was soon gone, the black clouds swept over it. Still it was a greeting, a friendly evening greeting, to me from the moon.

NINTH EVENING

The air was clear again; several evenings had passed, while the moon was in its first quarter. Then I got a new idea for a sketch: hear what the moon told me. "I have followed the polar birds and the swimming whales to the east coast of Greenland. Gaunt ice-covered rocks and dark clouds overhung a valley where willows and bilberry bushes stood in thick bloom, and the scented lychnis diffused its fragrance; my light was dim and my crescent pale as the leaf of the water-lily which has been floating for weeks upon the waters after being torn away from its stem. The corona of the northern lights burned with a fierce light. The rays spread out from its wide circle, over the heavens like whirling columns of fire playing in green and red lights. The inhabitants were assembled for dancing and merry-making, but they had no wonder to bestow on the glorious sight, so accustomed to it were they. 'Let the souls of the dead play at ball with the walrus's head as much as they like,' they thought, according to their superstitions. Their attention was entirely centred on the dancing and singing. A Greenlander without his fur coat stood in the middle of the circle, with a small drum in his hand, on which he played and at the same time sang a song in praise of seal hunting; the chorus answered him with 'Eia, eia, a!' and at the same time hopped round the circle in their white fur coats looking like polar bears. They wagged their heads and rolled their eyes in the wildest way. Then they held a mock

court of justice. The litigants stepped forward and the plaintiff rehearsed his opponent's faults all in a bold and mocking manner; the rest meanwhile dancing to the music of the drum. The defendant replied in the same spirit, and the assemblage laughingly gave their judgment. Thunders resounded from the mountains when portions of the ice fields slipped away, and great masses broke off shivering into dust. It was a typical Greenland summer night.

"A hundred paces away, under a tent of skins, lay a sick man; life was still coursing through his veins, yet he was to die. He knew it himself, and those standing round him knew it too, so much so that his wife was already sewing up the skin robe around him so as not to have to touch the dead man later. She asked him, 'Will you be buried on the Fells, in the hard snow, or would you rather be sunk in the sea?' 'In the sea,' he whispered, and nodded with a sad smile. 'Yes, the sea is a cozy summer tent,' said the woman. 'Thousands of seals sport about in it and the walrus will sleep at your feet; the chase is certain and plenty of it.' The children howled and tore away the tightened skin from the window, so that the dying man might be borne down to the sea, the swelling ocean which gave him food in life, and now in death a resting-place! His headstone was the floating iceberg which changes from day to day. Seals slumber on the ice, and the albatross spreads its great wings above it."

TENTH EVENING

"I knew an old maid," said the moon; "she used to wear a yellow satin pelisse in winter. It was always new, and she never varied the fashion of it. Every summer she used to wear the same straw hat, and, I believe, a bluish gray dress. She only used to go and see one old friend, who lived across the street; but for the last few years she did not go, for her friend was dead. My old friend bustled about in her loneliness by her window, which was always full of beautiful flowers

in summer, and in the winter she grew splendid mustard and cress on a piece of felt. For the last few months she has not appeared at the window, but I knew that she still lived, for I had not seen her take the great journey about which she and her friend talked so much. 'Yes,' she used to say, 'when my time comes to die, I shall travel much farther than I have ever done in my whole life. Our family burial place is twenty miles from here, and I am to be taken there for my last sleep with the rest of my family!' Last night a van stopped at the door, and a coffin was carried out, so I knew that she was dead. They put straw round the coffin and drove off. In it slept the quiet old maid, who for the last few years had not been outside the house. The van rattled quickly out of the town, as if bent on a pleasure trip. They went faster still when they reached the high-road. The driver looked over his shoulder every now and then; I believe he was half afraid of seeing the old lady sitting there, on the top of the coffin, in her yellow pelisse. Then he whipped up the horses mercilessly and held them in so tightly that they foamed at the mouth, a hare darted across the road, and they got beyond the man's control. The quiet old maid, who year in, year out, had moved so slowly in her daily round, now that she was dead, was being hurried at a headlong pace over stock and stone along the road. The coffin, which was wrapped in mats, slipped off the van and fell on to the road, while driver, horses, and van rushed away in their wild flight. A little lark flew up from the field and burst into its morning song, right over the coffin. It perched on it and pecked at the matting, as if to tear the shell asunder, then it rose gaily warbling into the air, and I drew back behind the rosy clouds of dawn!"

ELEVENTH EVENING

"It was a bridal feast!" said the moon. "Songs were sung, toasts were drunk, everything was gay and festive. The guests went away; it was past midnight. The mothers

kissed the bride and the bridegroom. Then I saw them alone, but the curtains were almost closely drawn; the comfortable room was lit up by a lamp. 'Thank goodness, they are all gone,' said he, kissing her hands and her lips. She smiled and wept and leant her head upon his breast, trembling like the lotus flower upon the flowing waters. They talked together in tender glowing words. 'Sleep sweetly!' he exclaimed, and she drew aside the window curtain. 'How beautifully the moon is shining!' she said; 'see how still and clear it is!' Then she put out the lamp, and the cozy room was dark, except for my beams, which shone as brightly as his eyes. Oh, womanhood, kiss thou the poet's lyre, when he sings of the mysteries of life!"

TWELFTH EVENING

"I will give you a picture of Pompeii," said the moon. "I was in the outskirts of the town, in the street of Tombs, as it is called, where the beautiful monuments stand; it is the place where once joyous youths, crowned with roses, danced with the fair sisters of Lais. Now the stillness of death reigns. German soldiers in the Neapolitan pay keep guard and play at cards and dice. A crowd of strangers from the other side of the mountains came into the town with guides. They wanted to see this city risen from the grave under my full beams. I showed them the chariot tracks in the streets paved with slabs of lava; I showed them the names on the doors and the signboards still hanging. In the small courtyards they saw the basins of the fountains decorated with shells, but no stream of water played, and no songs resounded from the richly painted chambers where the metal dogs guarded the doors. It was indeed a city of the dead, only Vesuvius thundered forth its everlasting hymn, the several verses of which are called by man, 'a new eruption.' We went to the Temple of Venus, built of dazzling white marble, with its high altar in front of the broad steps, and the weeping willow shooting up among

the pillars. The air was blue and transparent, and in the background stood Vesuvius, inky black, with its column of fire like the stem of a pine tree. In the darkness the cloud of smoke looked like the crown of the tree, only it was blood-red illuminated by the internal flames. A songstress was among the company, a great and noted one; I have seen the homage paid to her in the various capitals of Europe. When they reached the tragic theatre, they all sat down on the stone steps of the amphitheatre. They filled up a little corner of it as in centuries gone by. The stage still stood with its walled side scenes, and two arches in the background through which one sees the same decoration as was seen then — nature herself, the hills between Amalfi and Sorrento. For a joke the singer mounted the stage and sang, for the place inspired her. I thought of the wild Arab horse, when it neighs, tosses its mane, and tears away — her song was so light and yet so assured. I also thought of the suffering mother beneath the cross on Golgotha, it was so full of deep feeling and pain. Round about echoed, just as it had done a thousand years ago, the sound of applause and delight. ‘Happy, gifted creature!’ they all cried. Three minutes later the stage was empty and not a sound was to be heard. The company departed, but the ruins stood unchanged, as they will stand for centuries, and no one will know of the momentary burst of applause, the notes of the beautiful songstress and her smiles; they are past and gone. Even to me they are but a vanished memory.”

THIRTEENTH EVENING

“I peeped through the windows of an editor’s office,” said the moon. “It was somewhere in Germany. It was well furnished; there were many books and a perfect chaos of papers. Several young men were present and the editor stood by the desk. Two small books, both by young authors, were to be reviewed. ‘This one has been sent to me,’ he said; ‘I have

not read it yet, but it is nicely got up; what do you say about the contents?' 'Oh,' said one, who was himself a poet, 'it is pretty good, a little drawn out, perhaps, but he is a young man still. The verses might be better, but the thoughts are sound if a little commonplace. What are you to say? you can't always think of something new. You will be quite safe in praising him, though I don't suppose he will ever be a great poet. He is well read, a first-rate Oriental scholar, and he has judgment. It was he who wrote that nice article on my "Reflections on Domestic Life." One must be kind to a young man.'

"'But he must be a regular ass!' said another man in the room; 'nothing is worse in poetry than mediocrity, and he will never rise above it.'

"'Poor fellow!' said a third, 'and his aunt is so delighted with him; it is she, Mr. Editor, who found so many subscribers to your last translation.'

"'Oh, the good woman. Well, I have reviewed the book quite briefly. Unmistakable talent — a welcome offering — a flower in the garden of poetry — well got up — and so on. But the other book! I suppose the author wants me to buy it. I hear it is being praised. He has genius, don't you think so?'

"'Oh, they all harp upon that,' said the poet; 'but he talks rather wildly! And the punctuation is most peculiar.'

"'It would do him good to pull him to pieces a bit and enrage him, or he will think too highly of himself!'

"'But that would be rather unreasonable,' cried another; 'don't let us carp at his small faults, rather let us rejoice over his good points: and he has many. He beats all the others.'

"'Heaven preserve us! If he is such a genius he will be able to stand some rough handling. There are plenty of people to praise him in private. Don't let us make him mad!'

"'Unmistakable talent,' wrote the editor, 'with the usual

want of care; that he can write incorrect verses may be seen on page 25, where there are two false quantities. A study of the Ancients is recommended, and so on!

“I went away,” said the moon, “and peeped through the window into the aunt’s room where the cherished poet sat, the *tame* one. He was worshipped by all the guests, and quite happy. I sought the other poet, the *wild* one; he was also at a large party, in the house of one of his admirers, where they were talking of the other poet’s book. ‘I mean to read yours, too,’ said Mæcenas; ‘but you know I never tell you anything but what I think, and, to tell the truth, I do not expect great things of you, you are too wild, and too fantastic; but I acknowledge that as a man you are very respectable.’

“A young girl sat in a corner, and she read in a book these words:

‘Let stifled genius lie below,
While you on dullness praise bestow,
So has it been from ages past
And aye will be, while earth doth last.’”

FOURTEENTH EVENING

The moon said to me: “There are two cottages by the roadside in the wood; the doors are low and the windows crooked, but the buckthorn and the berberis cluster round them. The roofs are overgrown with moss, yellow flowers and houseleek. There are only cabbages and potatoes in the little garden, but near the fence is a flowering elder-bush, and beneath it sat a little girl; her brown eyes were fixed upon the old oak between the cottages. It had a great gnarled trunk, and the crown had been sawed off, and the stork had built his nest on the top of the trunk. He was standing there now clattering his beak. A little boy came out and placed himself beside the girl; they were brother and sister.

“‘What are you looking at?’ he asked.

“‘I am looking at the stork,’ she said; ‘the woman next

door has told me that he is going to bring us a little brother or sister to-night, and I am watching to see them come.'

"'The stork won't bring one,' said the boy; 'our neighbour told me the same thing, but she laughed when she said it, and I asked if she dared swear by the name of God, and she dared not, so I know very well that all that nonsense about the stork is just something they make up for us children!'

"'Where will the little baby come from, then?' asked the girl.

"'Our Lord will bring it,' said the boy. 'God has it under His mantle; but nobody can see God, and so we shall not see Him bring it.'

"Just then a gust of wind rustled through the leaves of the elder-bush, and the children clasped their hands and looked at each other. It must be God sending the baby! They took hold of each other's hands. The cottage door opened, and a woman appeared. 'Come in now,' she said; 'come in and see what the stork has brought; it is a little brother!'

"The children nodded; they knew well enough he had come."

FIFTEENTH EVENING

"I was passing over Limborg heath," said the moon, "and I saw a lonely hut by the wayside. Some leafless trees grew round it, on one of which a nightingale was singing; it had lost its way. I knew that it must die of the cold, and that it was its swan-song I heard. At daybreak a caravan came along, of emigrant peasants, on their way to Bremen or Hamburg to take ship for America, where good fortune, the fortune of their dreams, was awaiting them. The women were carrying the babies and the bigger children skipped along beside them. A wretched horse drew a van on which were a few miserable articles of furniture. A cold wind blew and a little girl clung closer to her mother, who looked up at my waning disc, and thought what bitter need they had endured

at home, and of the heavy taxes which could not be paid. Her thoughts were those of the whole caravan, so the red dawn shone upon them, like a glimmer from that sun of fortune which was about to arise. They heard the song of the dying nightingale, and to them it was no false prophet, but rather a harbinger of good fortune. The wind whistled sharply, and they did not understand its song. Sail on securely over the ocean! you have given all that you possessed in return for the journey; poor and helpless you will land upon the shores of your Canaan. You must sell yourself, your wife, and your children, but you shall not suffer long. The goddess of death lurks behind the broad, fragrant leaves, her kiss of welcome will breathe pestilential fever into your blood! Sail on, sail on over the surging waters! But the travellers listened happily to the song of the nightingale, for it promised them good fortune. Daylight shone through the floating clouds, and peasants were wending their way over the heath to church. The women in their black dresses and with white kerchiefs round their heads looked as if they might have stepped down out of the old pictures in the church. Round about there was only the great dead plain covered with brown withered heather, and the white sand hills beyond. The women held their prayer-books in their hands and wandered on toward the church. Ah, pray, pray for those whose steps are leading them to the grave beyond the rolling waters!"

SIXTEENTH EVENING

"I know a Punchinello," said the moon. "The public shout directly they see him; each of his movements is so comic that the whole house roars when he appears; his personality makes them laugh, not his art. Even when he was little, playing about with the other boys, he was already a Punchinello. Nature had made him one; she had given him a hump on his back and one on his chest. But the inner man, the soul—ah,

that was richly endowed. No one had deeper feelings or greater elasticity of mind than he. The theatre was his ideal world. If he had been slender and well made he would have been the first tragedian on any stage. The great and the heroic filled his soul, and yet he had to be a Punchinello. Even his pain and his melancholy increased the comic dryness of his sharply cut features, and called forth laughter from the multitudes who applauded their favourite. The pretty Columbine was kind and friendly, but she preferred marrying the Harlequin. It would have been far too comic in real life if Beauty and the Beast had joined hands. When Punchinello was in low spirits, she was the only person who could make him smile, nay, even laugh outright. At first she would be melancholy too, then gay, and at last full of fun. 'I know what is the matter with you, well enough!' said she; 'you are in love.' 'I and love,' he exclaimed; 'we should be a nice pair! How the public would applaud us!' 'You are in love,' she repeated. 'You are in love with me.' That might very well be said when one knew there was no question of love. Punchinello laughed, and bounded into the air; all his melancholy was gone. Yet she had spoken the truth; he loved her, worshipped her, as he worshipped all that was highest and best in Art. At her wedding he was the merriest person there, but at night he wept bitter tears. Had the public seen his distorted face they would indeed have applauded.

"Quite lately Columbine had died, and on the day of her burial Harlequin had a holiday; was he not a sorrowing widower? The manager was obliged to produce something more than usually merry, so that the public should not miss pretty Columbine. Therefore Punchinello had to be doubly lively; he danced and bounded with despair in his heart, and he was more applauded than ever. 'Bravo! Bravissimo!' Punchinello was called forward, he was indeed above all price.

"Last night after the performance the little hunchback wandered out of the town to the lonely churchyard. The



If the public had seen their favorite how they would have shouted
"Bravo! Bravissimo! PUNCHINELLO"

wreaths were already withering on Columbine's grave. He sat down upon it. It would have made a touching picture, with his hand under his chin, his eyes turned toward me; he was like a monument, a PUNCHINELLO on a grave, characteristic and comical. If the public had seen their favourite how they would have shouted, 'Bravo! Bravissimo! PUNCHINELLO.'

SEVENTEETH EVENING

Listen to what the moon told me. "I have seen the cadet become an officer, and for the first time put on his handsome uniform. I have seen the young girl in her ball dress, and I have seen a royal bride rejoicing in her festal robes; but I have never seen greater delight than I saw last night in a child, a little four-year-old girl. She had on a new blue frock and a pink hat; they had just been put on, and the bystanders were calling for lights. The moon shining through the window gave too faint a light; they must have something brighter altogether. There stood the little girl as stiff as any doll, holding her arms away from the dress, each finger stuck stiffly out! Oh! how her eyes glistened, and her whole face beamed with delight. 'To-morrow you shall go out in them,' said the mother; and the little one looked down at her frock and smiled contentedly. 'Mother!' she said, 'what will the dogs think when they see me in all my pretty things!'"

EIGHTEENTH EVENING

"I have told you," said the moon, "about Pompeii, that city of the dead resuscitated, and again ranking among living places. I know another town even more fantastic; it is not so much the corpse as it is the ghost of a city. I seem to hear the romance of the floating city wherever the fountains play into their marble basins. Yes, water must tell its story, the waves of the sea sing its song! A mist often floats over

the stretches of its waters; that is its veil of widowhood. The bridegroom of the sea is dead; his palace and town are now his mausoleum. Do you know this city? Never has the roll of wheels or the clatter of horses' hoofs been heard in its streets. The fish swim in them, and the black gondola skims over the surface of its green waters. I will show you," continued the moon, "the Forum of the town, its grand square, and you may imagine yourself to have been in Fairyland. The grass grows between its broad flags, and at dawn thousands of tame pigeons flutter round its solitary lofty tower. On three sides of it you are surrounded by colonnades; under their shelter the silent Turk sits smoking his long pipe. A handsome Greek boy leans against the columns, and looks up at the trophies and lofty masts raised around, memorials of its ancient power. The flags droop from them like mourning scarves. Here a girl is resting; she has put down her heavy water-pails, and the yoke in which she carried them hangs on her shoulders; she supports herself against the column of Victory. That is no Fairy palace there in front of you; it is a church; its gilt cupolas and balls glitter in my beams. Those majestic bronze horses have travelled, like the bronze horse in the Fairy tale. They came hither, went hence, and again returned. Do you see the gorgeous colouring on the walls and in the window-panes? It looks as if genius had given way to the whims of some child in adorning the wonderful Temple. Do you see the winged lion on its column? The gold still glitters, but its wings are bound; the lion is dead, for the king of the sea is dead; his great halls are empty, and there are only bare walls now where costly pictures used to hang. The Lazzaroni sleep now under the arches, on whose floor only the highest nobles in the land dared at one time to tread. From the deep wells — or does it come from the leaden chambers near the Bridge of Sighs? — sounds a groan, just as in the days when tambourines sounded from the gondolas with their gay trappings, when the bridal ring flew from the brilliant Bucentaur to Adria, queen of the

sea. Oh, Adria, wrap thyself in the mist! Let thy widow's veil cover thy bosom! Hang it over the mausoleum of the bridegroom, oh, Venice, thou city of ghostly, marble palaces."

NINETEENTH EVENING

"I was looking down on a large theatre," said the moon. "The whole house was crammed with spectators, for a new actor was to make his *début*. My beams glided over a little window in the wall. A painted face was pressed against its panes; it was the hero of the evening. The knightly beard curled around his chin, but there were tears in the man's eyes, for he had been hissed off the stage, and rightly hissed off. Poor fellow! But a 'poor fellow' can't be tolerated in the Kingdom of Art. His feelings were deep, and he loved his art enthusiastically, but art did not love him. The call bell rang; the hero enters; 'boldly and gallantly' was the stage direction. He had to face an audience to whom he was a laughing-stock. When the piece came to an end, I saw a man, muffled in a cloak, creep downstairs. It was the crushed knight of the evening; the scene-shifters whispered to each other. I followed the poor wretch to his home. Hanging is an ugly death, and one has not always got poison at hand. I know he thought of both. I saw him look at his pale face in the glass, and half shut his eyes to see if he would be a handsome corpse. A man may be most unhappy and yet very affected. He thought of death, of suicide; I believe he wept over himself; he wept bitterly; and when a man has been able to shed tears he does not kill himself.

"A whole year has passed since then. There was a play being acted at a small theatre by a poor touring company. I saw a well-known face, the painted cheeks and curly beard. He looked up at me and smiled; and yet he had been hissed off the stage only a minute ago; hissed by a miserable, low-class audience in a wretched theatre!

“To-night a poor hearse drove out of the town gates, not a soul following it. It was a suicide — our poor, painted, despised hero. The driver was the only mourner, nobody else only the moon. The suicide is laid in the corner of the churchyard, under the wall. The nettles will soon shoot up, and the grave-diggers will throw weeds and rubbish on it from other graves.”

TWENTIETH EVENING

“I come from Rome,” said the moon. “There in the middle of the town, on the summit of one of the seven hills, stands the ruins of the palace of the Cæsars. The wild fig grows now in the crevices of the walls, covering their nakedness with its broad grayish green leaves. The ass treads down its laurel hedges among the heaps of stones, and browses on the barren thistle. Here, whence once the eagles of Rome fluttered — came, saw, and conquered — there is now the entrance to a poor little hovel plastered up with clay between the two broken marble columns. The vine hangs like a mourning wreath over its crooked windows. An old woman lives in it with her little granddaughter; they now rule in the palace of the Cæsars, and show its treasures to visitors. There is only a bare wall left standing of the rich throne room; the dark cypress points with its long shadows to where the throne once stood. The earth is heaped high over the ruined floor, and the little girl, now sole daughter of the Cæsars, often brings her footstool there when the evening bells ring. She calls the keyhole in the door close by her balcony, for she can see half Rome through it, as far as the mighty dome of St. Peter’s. Silence reigned, as always, this evening when the little girl came out into the full light of my beams. She was carrying a water jar of antique shape on her head: her feet were bare, her short skirt and the sleeves of her little chemise were ragged. I kissed the child’s delicately rounded shoulders, her dark

eyes, and black shining hair. She climbed up the steps to the little house; they were steep and made of sharp bits of marble from the broken columns. Gaily coloured lizards darted about among her feet, but they did not startle her. She was just raising her hand to the bell-pull; this was a hare's foot at the end of a piece of string, such is the bell now in the palace of the Cæsars. She paused a moment — what was she thinking about? Perhaps about the beautiful Infant Jesus wrapped in gold and silver down in the chapel, where the silver lamps gleamed, and where her little friends took part in singing the hymns which she knew, too; I do not know — she moved forward again, tripped, and the jar fell from her head, on to the steps, where it was broken to atoms upon the fluted marble. She burst into tears. The beautiful daughter of the Cæsars, weeping over the poor broken jar. There she stood with her bare feet, weeping, and dared not pull the string—the bell-rope of the palace of the Cæsars.”

TWENTY-FIRST EVENING

The moon had not shone for over a fortnight, but now I saw it again; it rose round and bright above the slowly moving clouds. Listen to what it told me.

“I followed a caravan from one of the towns of the Fezzan. They made a halt near the desert by one of the salt plains; it shone like a sheet of ice, and was covered only in parts with quicksands. An elder among them with a water bottle hanging at his belt, and a bag of unleavened bread lying by him, drew a square with his staff in the sand and wrote in it some words from the Koran. After this the whole caravan entered within the consecrated space. A young merchant, a child of the sun — I saw it in his eyes and in the beautiful lines of his figure — rode his fiery white steed thoughtfully. Was he perhaps thinking of his fair young wife? It was only two days since a camel covered with skins and costly shawls carried her,

his lovely bride, round the walls of the town, to the sound of drums and pipes. Women sang and festive salvoes were fired; the loudest and most frequent were fired by the bridegroom himself, and now — now he was leading the caravan through the desert. I followed them for many nights; I saw them rest by the wells among the dwarf palms. They stuck their knives into the breast of the fallen camel, and roasted the meat by the fire. My beams cooled the burning sand, my beams showed them the buried rocks like submerged islands in a sea of sand. They encountered no unfriendly tribes on the trackless plain, no storms arose, and no sandstorm swept mercilessly over the caravan. At home the lovely wife prayed for her husband and her father. ‘Are they dead?’ she asked my golden horns. ‘Are they dead?’ she asked my shining disc. Now the desert lies behind them, and this evening they sit beneath the lofty palm trees, where the crane spreads its broad wings and the pelican watches them through the branches of the mimosa. The luxuriant thicket is trodden down by the heavy feet of the elephant; a troop of negroes are returning from the market far inland. The women have copper beads twisted round their heads of frizzled hair, and they are clad in skirts of indigo blue. They drive the heavily laden oxen, on whose backs the naked black children lie sleeping. A negro leads by a rope a young lion which he has bought; they approach the caravan. The young merchant sits motionless and silent, thinking of his lovely bride; dreaming, in the land of the blacks, of his white flower beyond the desert; he lifts his head!”

A cloud passed over the moon, and then another; I heard no more that evening.

TWENTY-SECOND EVENING

“I saw a little girl crying,” said the moon. “She was crying at the wickedness of the world. The loveliest doll in

the world had been given to her. Oh, it was most delicate and fragile, and certainly not fit to face adversity. But the little girl's brothers, great big boys, had taken the doll away and put it up into a high tree, and then had run away. The poor little girl could not get it down, or get at it in any way, so she sat down and cried. The doll no doubt was crying, too; it stretched out its arms among the branches, and looked most unhappy. Yes, this must be the adversity of the world, about which mamma talked so much. Oh, the poor doll! Evening was coming on, it was getting dark, and it would soon be night. Was it to stay out there all alone in the tree for the whole night? No, the little girl could not endure the thought. 'I will stay with you,' she said, although she was not at all courageous, and she fancied already that she could see the little Brownies in their high-pointed caps peeping through the bushes, and there were long ghostly shadows dancing about in the dark walk. They came nearer and nearer, and stretched out their hands toward the tree where the doll was sitting; and they laughed, and pointed their fingers at her. Oh! how frightened the little girl was. 'But if one has committed no sin,' she thought, 'evil can do one no harm. I wonder if I have sinned!' Then she began to think. 'Oh, yes,' she said, 'I laughed at the poor duck with a red rag round its leg; it looked so funny limping along, so I laughed, and it is a sin to laugh at dumb animals.' Then she looked up at her doll. 'Have you ever laughed at dumb animals?' And the doll seemed to shake its head."

TWENTY-THIRD EVENING

"I looked down in the Tyrol," said the moon. "I let the dark pine trees throw their long shadows on to the rocks. I saw St. Christopher with the child Jesus on his back, as they are painted on the walls of the houses; they are colossal in size, reaching from the ground to the tops of the gables. There is also St. Florian pouring water on the burning house, and the

Saviour hanging bleeding on the cross at the roadside. These are old pictures to the new generation, but I saw their origin. There is a solitary convent perched upon the mountain-side like a swallow's nest. Two of the sisters were standing up in the tower ringing the bell; they were both young, so their glances roamed over the mountains into the wide world beyond. A travelling carriage drove along the high road; the post horn sounded gaily and the poor nuns fixed their eyes, filled with the same thoughts, upon the carriage; a tear stood in those of the youngest. The sound of the horn grew fainter and fainter till its dying notes were drowned by the convent bell."

TWENTY-FOURTH EVENING

Hear what the moon told me.

"Several years ago I was in Copenhagen; I peeped in at the window of a poor little room. The father and mother were both asleep, but their little son was awake. I saw the flowered chintz curtains stirring and the child peeped out. I thought at first that he was looking at the grandfather's clock from Bornholm. It was gaily painted in red and green, and a cuckoo sat at the top; it had heavy leaden weights and the pendulum, with its shining brass disc, swung backward and forward. 'Tiek, tack'; but that was not what he was looking at. No, it was his mother's spinning-wheel which stood under the clock. It was the boy's dearest treasure in all the house, but he dared not touch it or he would be rapped over the knuckles. He would stand for hours, while his mother was spinning, looking at the whirling spindle, and the whizzing wheel, and he had his own thoughts about them. Oh, if only he dared spin with that wheel; father and mother were asleep; he looked at them, he looked at the wheel, and soon he put one bare little foot out of bed, and then another little bare foot followed by two little legs, bump, there he stood upon the floor. He turned round once more to see if father and mother were

still asleep. Yes, they were fast asleep; so he went softly, very softly, in his short little shirt, to the wheel and began to spin. The cord flew off and the wheel ran faster and faster. I kissed his yellow hair and his large blue eyes. It was a pretty picture.

“His mother woke just then. She put the curtain aside and looked out and thought she saw a Brownie or some other little sprite. ‘In Heaven’s name,’ she said, pushing her husband; he opened his eyes, rubbed them, and looked at the busy little figure. ‘Why, it is our Bertel!’ he said. And my eye turned away from the poor little room. My glances extend so far that at the same moment I looked in at the galleries of the Vatican where the sculptured gods stand. I flooded the Laocoön group with my light, and the marble seemed to sigh. I pressed a gentle kiss upon the bosom of the muses; they almost seemed to move. But my glance rested longest upon the great Nile group with the colossal god. He leant pensively against the Sphinx, dreamy and thoughtful, as if he was pondering on the bygone years. Little Cupids played around him sporting with the crocodiles. One tiny little Cupid sat inside the cornucopia with his arms folded looking at the great solemn river-god. He was a true picture of the little boy at the spinning-wheel; his features were the same. This little marble child was lifelike and graceful in the extreme, yet the wheel of time had turned more than a thousand times since he sprang from the marble. Just so many times as the little boy turned the spinning-wheel in the humble little room had the greater wheel of time whirled round, and yet will whirl, before the present time creates marble gods like these.

“Now all this happened years ago,” continued the moon. “Yesterday I looked down on to a bay on the east coast of Zealand. The cliffs round it were beautifully wooded, and in the midst of the woods stood an old red castle with swans swimming in the moat. A little country town lay near with

its church buried among apple trees. A procession of boats with blazing torches glided over the smooth waters; these torches were not lighted for spearing eels. No, it was a great festivity; there were sounds of music and singing, and in one of the boats stood the object of all the homage. He was a tall powerful man wrapped in a cloak; he had blue eyes and long white hair. I knew him and thought of the Vatican and the Nile group among all the sculptured gods. Then I thought of the poor little room; I believe it was in 'Grønné-gade' where little Bertel sat spinning in his little shirt. The wheel of time had been turning and new gods have arisen from the marble since then. From the boats came 'Hurrah, hurrah, for Bertel Thorwaldsen!'"

TWENTY-FIFTH EVENING

"I will give you a picture from Frankfort," said the moon. "I looked at one building in particular. It was not Goethe's birthplace, nor the old Townhall, where through the grated windows may still be seen the horns of the oxen which were roasted and given to the people at the coronation of the Emperor. No, it was a burgher's house I looked at; it was painted green and was quite plain; it stood at the corner of the narrow Jew's street. It was Rothschild's house. I looked in through the open door; the staircase was brightly lighted; footmen stood there holding burning lights in massive silver candlesticks, bending low before the old woman who was being carried down in a carrying-chair. The owner of the house stood with bared head and pressed a respectful kiss upon her hand. She was his mother; she nodded kindly to him and the footmen, and they carried her into a little house in the dark narrow street. Here she lived, here she had borne her children, from here their fortune had blossomed forth. If she now left the little house in the mean street perhaps their luck would leave them. This was her belief."

The moon told me no more; her visit to-night was far too short, but I thought of the old woman in the narrow mean street. One word from her, and she might have a palace on the banks of the Thames; one word, and she would have had a villa on the Bay of Naples. "Were I to leave this humble house where the fortunes of my sons originated, their fortune might forsake them." It is a superstition, but a superstition of such a kind that if one knows the story and sees the picture it only needs two words to understand it, "A Mother."

TWENTY-SIXTH EVENING

"Yesterday at daybreak," these were the moon's own words, "not a chimney was yet smoking in the great town, and it was these very chimneys I was looking at, when suddenly a little head popped out at the top of one of them followed by the upper part of a body, with the arms resting on the edge of the chimney. 'Hurrah!' It was a little chimney-sweep who had gone right up a chimney for the first time in his life, and got his head out at the top. 'Hurrah!' this was a very different matter from creeping about in the narrow flues and smaller chimneys. A fresh breeze met his face, and he could see right out over the town away to the green woods beyond. The sun was just rising, big and round, and it shone straight into his face, which beamed with delight, although it was thoroughly smudged with soot. 'Now the whole town can see me,' said he, 'and the moon can see me, and the sun, too, hurrah!' and he waved his brush above his head."

TWENTY-SEVENTH EVENING

"Last night I looked down upon a town in China," said the moon; "my beams illumined the long blank walls which border the streets. Here and there you certainly find a door, but it is always tightly shut, for what does the Chinaman

care about the outside world! The windows of the houses behind the walls are closely covered with jalousies. The Temple was the only place whence a dim light shone through the windows. I looked in upon its gorgeous colours. The walls from floor to ceiling are covered with pictures in strong colours and rich gilding. They are representations of the labours of the gods here on earth. There is an image of a god in every niche, almost hidden by gorgeous draperies and floating banners. Before each of the gods — which are all made of tin — stands a little altar with holy water, flowers and burning wax tapers. At the upper end of the Temple stands Fu, the chief of all the gods; he is draped in silk of the sacred yellow. At the foot of the altar sat a living being, a young priest. He seemed to be praying, but in the midst of his prayers to fall into a reverie; and no doubt that was a sin, for his cheeks burnt, and his head sank lower and lower. Poor Soui-houng! was he in his dream seeing himself behind those dreary walls in a little garden of his own, working at the flower beds? Perhaps a labour much dearer to him than this of tending wax tapers in the Temple. Or was it his desire to sit at a richly spread table, wiping his lips between each course with tissue paper? Or, was his sin so great that, did he dare to express it, the Heavenly powers would punish him with death? Did his thoughts venture to stray with the barbarians' ships to their home in far-distant England? No, his thoughts did not fly so far afield, and yet they were as sinful as only the hot blood of youth can conceive them. Sinful, here in the Temple, before the image of Fu and the other gods. I know whither his thoughts had wandered.

“In the outskirts of the town, upon the flat flagged roof of a house where the parapet seemed to be made of porcelain, and among handsome vases full of large white bell-shaped flowers, sat the lovely Pé, with her narrow roguish eyes, full lips, and tiny feet. Her shoes pinched, but the pressure at her heart was far greater, and she wearily raised her delicately



Her thoughts wandered from her home and sought the Temple, but not for the sake of God! Poor Pé! Poor Soui-houng!

modelled arms in their rustling satin sleeves. In front of her stood a glass bowl with four goldfish in it; she slowly stirred the water with a little painted and lacquered stick—slowly, oh, very slowly, for she was musing. Was she thinking how richly the fish were clad in gold, and how securely they lived in their glass bowl with all their plentiful food, and yet, how much happier they would be if they had their freedom? Ah, yes, the fair Pé thoroughly comprehended that. Her thoughts wandered from her home and sought the Temple, but not for the sake of God! Poor Pé! Poor Soui-houng! their earthly thoughts met, but my cold beams fell between them like an angel's sword!"

TWENTY-EIGHTH EVENING

"It was a dead calm," said the moon; "the water was as transparent as the pure air that I was traversing. I could see the curious plants down under the water; they were like giant forest trees stretching toward me, many fathoms long. The fish swam over their tops; a flock of wild swans were flying past high up in the air; one of them sank with outspread wings lower and lower. It followed with its eyes the aerial caravan, as the distance between them rapidly increased. It held its wings outspread and motionless, and sank as a soap bubble sinks in the quiet air; when it touched the surface of the water, it bent its head back between its wings, and lay as still as the white lotus blossom on a tranquil lake. A gentle breeze rose and swelled the glittering surface of the phosphorescent water, brilliant as ether itself rolling on in great broad billows. The swan lifted its head and the sparkling water dashed over its back and breast like blue flames. Dawn shed its rosy light around, and the swan soared aloft with renewed vigour toward the rising sun, toward the faint blue coast line, whither the aerial caravan took its flight. But it flew alone with longing in its breast. Solitary it flew over the swelling blue waters."

TWENTY-NINTH EVENING

“I will give you one more picture from Sweden,” said the moon. “Among gloomy forests near the melancholy shores of the Roxen, stands the old convent church of Wreta. My beams fell through a grating in the wall into a spacious vault, where kings slumber in their marble tombs. A royal crown glitters on the wall above them as an emblem of earthly glory; a royal crown, but it is made of painted wood, and kept in place by a wooden peg driven into the wall. Worms have gnawed through the gilded wood; the spider has spun its web from the crown to the coffin. It is a mourning banner, frail and transient as the grief of mortals. How calm their slumber! I remember them distinctly. I still see the confident smile around those lips which so authoritatively and decidedly uttered words of joy or grief.

“When the steamer comes up among the mountains like a bark from fairyland, many a stranger comes to the church and pays a visit to this burial vault. He asks the kings’ names, and they echo with a dead and forgotten sound. He looks at the worm-eaten crown, and if he has a pious mind, there is sadness in his smile. Sleep on, ye Dead! The moon remembers you, the moon sends her cold beams in the night, into your silent kingdom, over which the wooden crown hangs.”

THIRTIETH EVENING

“Close to the high-road,” said the moon, “stands an inn, and immediately opposite to it is a great wagon shed, the roof of which was being thatched. I looked through the rafters, and through the open trap-door into the uncomfortable space below. A turkey cock was asleep on a beam, and a saddle was resting in an empty crib. A travelling carriage stood in the middle of the shed. Its owners slept in it as safely as possible, while the horses were being fed and watered,

and the driver stretched his legs, although — and I know it for a certainty — he had been fast asleep for more than half the way. The door of the groom's bedroom was open, the bed was topsy-turvy, and a candle guttered on the floor. The wind whistled cold through the shed; it was nearer daybreak than midnight. A party of strolling musicians were asleep in a stall. The father and mother, I daresay, were dreaming of the drops of liquid fire in their flask, and the pale girl about the teardrop in her eye; a harp lay at their head, and a dog at their feet."

THIRTY-FIRST EVENING

"It was in a little country town," said the moon. "I saw it last year, but that doesn't matter, for I saw it so distinctly. To-night I read about it in the papers, but the story is not nearly so intelligible in them. A bear-leader was sitting in the bar of a public house eating his supper; his bear was tied up outside behind the woodshed. Poor bear! he wouldn't harm a creature, though he looked fierce enough. Three little children were playing in the light of my beams up in an attic; the eldest was perhaps six years old, the youngest not more than two! Flop, flop! a muffled sound was heard coming up the stairs, who could it be? The door flew open — it was the bear, great shaggy Bruin! He was bored by standing out there in the yard, and he had found his way upstairs. I saw it all," said the moon. "The children were very much frightened when they first saw the big furry animal; they each crept into a different corner, but he found them out. He snuffed at them all, but did not hurt them. 'Why, it must be a great big dog,' they thought, and they began to pat him. He lay down upon the floor, and the smallest boy rolled about on the top of him, and played at hiding his golden locks in the bear's long black coat. Then the biggest boy got out his drum, and played upon it as hard as ever he could; as soon as he heard it the bear got up on his hind legs and danced;

it was a pretty sight. Each boy shouldered his gun, and the bear, of course, had to have one, too, and he held it as tightly as any of them. This was indeed a rare playmate they had got, and no mistake. They marched up and down 'one, two; one, two!' Just then some one came to the door and opened it; it was the children's mother. You should have seen the terrible, speechless agony in her ashen face, with open mouth, and starting eyes. But the smallest boy nodded to her; he was ever so pleased, and cried out loud, in his baby way, 'We are only playing soldiers, mother.' And then the bear-leader made his appearance."

THIRTY-SECOND EVENING

The wind blew strong and cold, the clouds were chasing by, and the moon only appeared now and then.

"I look down upon the flying clouds from the silence of space above!" said he. "I can see the clouds chasing over the earth. Just lately I was looking down into a prison, outside which stood a closed carriage; a prisoner was about to leave. My beams penetrated the grated window and shone upon the inside wall. The prisoner was tracing some lines upon the wall; it was his farewell. He did not write words, but a tune; the outpouring of his heart on his last night in this place. The door opened and he was conducted to the carriage; he looked up at my round disc — clouds flew between us, as if he might not see my face nor I his. He got into the carriage, the door was shut, the whip cracked, and off they went through the thick forest, where my beams could not reach. I looked in through the prison grating again, and my beams fell once more upon the wall where the melody was traced — his last farewell: where words fail, melody may often speak! But my rays only lighted up a few isolated notes, the greater part will always remain dark to me. Was it a death hymn he wrote? or were they carolling notes of joy? Was he driving to meet

his death, or to the embrace of his beloved? The beams of the moon cannot read all that even mortals write. I look down on the flying clouds, from the silence of space above, and I see big clouds chasing across the earth."

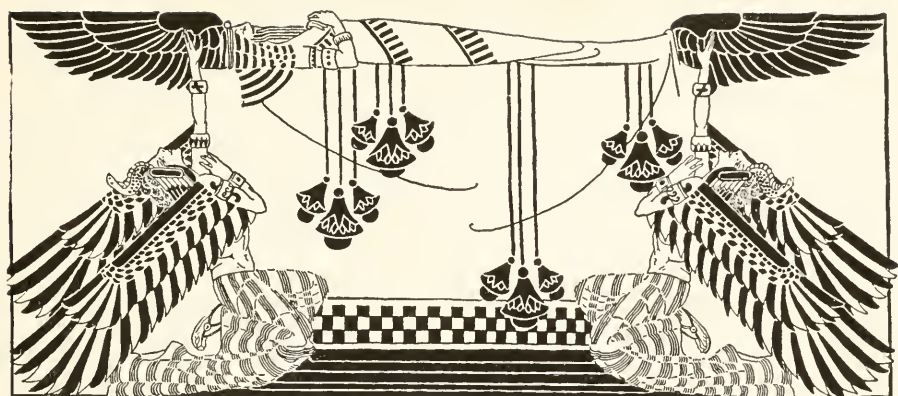
THIRTY-THIRD EVENING

"I am very fond of children," said the moon; "the little ones especially are so amusing. I often peep at them through the curtains when they least think I see them. It is so amusing to see them trying to undress themselves; first, a little round naked shoulder appears out of the frock, then one arm slips out. Or I see a stocking pulled off a dimpled little leg, firm and round, and then comes out a little foot made to be kissed, and I kissed it," said the moon. "I must tell you what I saw to-night. I looked in at a window where the blind did not reach the bottom, for there were no opposite neighbours. I saw a whole flock of little ones, brothers and sisters. One little girl is only four years old, but she knows 'Our Father' as well as any of them, and her mother sits by her bed every evening to hear it. Then she kisses her and sits by her till she falls asleep, which generally happens as soon as she shuts her eyes.

"To-night the two eldest were rather wild; one of them hopped about on one leg in his long white nightgown. The second one stood on a chair with the clothes of all the others heaped upon him; he said it was a tableau, and they must guess what it meant. The third and fourth were putting their toys carefully away in a drawer, and, of course, that has to be done, but their mother said they must be quiet, for the little one was going to say her prayers. I peeped in over the lamp," said the moon. "The little four-year-old girl lay in bed among all the fine white linen, her little hands were folded, and her face quite grave and serious, and she began, 'Our Father,' aloud. 'But what is this,' said her mother, interrupting her

in the middle. 'When you have said, "give us this day our daily bread," you say something more which I can't quite hear; what is it? You must tell me.' The little girl hesitated, and looked shyly at her mother. 'What do you say after "give us this day our daily bread?"' 'Don't be angry, mother, dear,' said the little one; 'I say, please put plenty of butter on it.'





THE MARSH KING'S DAUGHTER

THE storks have a great many stories, which they tell their little ones, all about the bogs and the marshes. They suit them to their ages and capacity. The youngest ones are quite satisfied with "Kribble krabble," or some such nonsense; but the older ones want something with more meaning in it, or at any rate something about the family. We all know one of the two oldest and longest tales which have been kept up among the storks; the one about Moses, who was placed by his mother on the waters of the Nile, and found there by the king's daughter. How she brought him up and how he became a great man whose burial place nobody to this day knows. This is all common knowledge.

The other story is not known yet, because the storks have kept it among themselves. It has been handed on from one mother stork to another for more than a thousand years, and each succeeding mother has told it better and better, till we now tell it best of all.

The first pair of storks who told it, and who actually

lived it, had their summer quarters on the roof of the Viking's timbered house up by "Vidmosen" (the Wild Bog) in Wend-syssel. It is in the county of Hiörring, high up toward the Skaw, in the north of Jutland, if we are to describe it according to the authorities. There is still a great bog there, which we may read about in the county chronicles. This district used to be under the sea at one time, but the ground has risen, and it stretches for miles. It is surrounded on every side by marshy meadows, quagmires, and peat bogs, on which grow cloud berries and stunted bushes. There is nearly always a damp mist hanging over it, and seventy years ago it was still overrun with wolves. It may well be called the Wild Bog, and one can easily imagine how desolate and dreary it was among all these swamps and pools a thousand years ago. In detail everything is much the same now as it was then. The reeds grow to the same height, and have the same kind of long purple-brown leaves with feathery tips as now. The birch still grows there with its white bark and its delicate loosely hanging leaves. With regard to living creatures, the flies still wear their gauzy draperies of the same cut; and the storks now, as then, still dress in black and white, with long red stockings. The people certainly then had a very different cut for their clothes than at the present day; but if any of them, serf or huntsman, or anybody at all, stepped on the quagmires, the same fate befell him a thousand years ago as would overtake him now if he ventured on them — in he would go, and down he would sink to the Marsh King, as they call him. He rules down below over the whole kingdom of bogs and swamps. He might also be called King of the Quagmires, but we prefer to call him the Marsh King, as the storks did. We know very little about his rule, but that is perhaps just as well.

Near the bogs, close to the arm of the Cattegat, called the Limfiord, lay the timbered hall of the Vikings with its stone cellar, its tower, and its three storeys. The storks had built their nest on the top of the roof, and the mother stork was



She who is related to the fairies!

sitting on the eggs which she was quite sure would soon be successfully hatched.

One evening Father Stork stayed out rather late, and when he came back he looked somewhat ruffled.

"I have something terrible to tell you!" he said to the mother stork.

"Don't tell it to me then," she answered; "remember that I am sitting; it might upset me and that would be bad for the eggs!"

"You will have to know it," said he; "she has come here, the daughter of our host in Egypt. She has ventured to take the journey, and now she has disappeared."

"She who is related to the fairies! Tell me all about it. You know I can't bear to be kept waiting now I am sitting."

"Look here, mother! She must have believed what the doctor said as you told me; she believed that the marsh flowers up here would do something for her father, and she flew over here in feather plumage with the other two Princesses, who have to come north every year to take the baths to make themselves young. She came, and she has vanished."

"You go into too many particulars," said the mother stork; "the eggs might get a chill, and I can't stand being kept in suspense."

"I have been on the outlook," said Father Stork, "and to-night when I was among the reeds where the quagmire will hardly bear me, I saw three swans flying along, and there was something about their flight which said to me, 'Watch them, they are not real swans! They are only in swans' plumage.' You know, mother, as well as I, that one feels things intuitively, whether or not they are what they seem to be."

"Yes, indeed!" she said, "but tell me about the Princess. I am quite tired of hearing about swan's plumage."

"You know that in the middle of the bog there is a kind of lake," said Father Stork. "You can see a bit of it if you

raise your head. Well, there was a big alder stump between the bushes and the quagmire, and on this the three swans settled, flapping their wings and looking about them. Then one of them threw off the swan's plumage, and I at once recognized in her our Princess from Egypt. There she sat with no covering but her long black hair; I heard her beg the two others to take good care of the swan's plumage while she dived under the water to pick up the marsh flower which she thought she could see. They nodded and raised their heads, and lifted up the loose plumage. What are they going to do with it, thought I, and she no doubt asked them the same thing; and the answer came, she had ocular demonstration of it: they flew up into the air with the feather garment! 'Just you duck down,' they cried. 'Never again will you fly about in the guise of a swan; never more will you see the land of Egypt; you may sit in your swamp.' Then they tore the feather garment into a hundred bits, scattering the feathers all over the place, like a snowstorm; then away flew those two good-for-nothing Princesses."

"What a terrible thing!" said Mother Stork; "but I must have the end of it."

"The Princess moaned and wept! Her tears trickled down upon the alder stump, and then it began to move, for it was the Marsh King himself, who lives in the bog. I saw the stump turn round, and saw that it was no longer a stump; it stretched out long miry branches like arms. The poor child was terrified, and she sprang away on to the shaking quagmire where it would not even bear my weight, far less hers. She sank at once and the alder stump after her; it was dragging her down. Great black bubbles rose in the slime, and then there was nothing more to be seen. Now she is buried in the Wild Bog and never will she take back the flowers she came for to Egypt. You could not have endured the sight, mother!"

"You shouldn't even tell me anything of the sort just now,



“You shouldn’t even tell me anything of the sort just now, it might have a bad effect upon the eggs”

it might have a bad effect upon the eggs. The Princess must look after herself. She will get help somehow; if it had been you or I, now, or one of our sort, all would have been over with us!"

"I mean to keep a watch, though, every day," said the stork, and he kept his word.

But a long time passed, and then one day he saw that a green stem shot up from the fathomless depths, and when it reached the surface of the water a leaf appeared at the top which grew broader and broader. Next a bud appeared close by it, and one morning at dawn, just as the stork was passing, the bud opened out in the warm rays of the sun, and in the middle of it lay a lovely baby, a little girl looking just as fresh as if she had just come out of a bath. She was so exactly like the Princess from Egypt that at first the stork thought it was she who had grown small; but when he put two and two together, he came to the conclusion that it was her child and the Marsh King's. This explained why she appeared in a water lily. "She can't stay there very long," thought the stork; "and there are too many of us in my nest as it is, but an idea has just come into my head! The Viking's wife has no child, and she has often wished for one. As I am always said to bring the babies, this time I will do so in earnest. I will fly away to the Viking's wife with the baby, and that will indeed be a joy for her."

So the stork took up the little girl and flew away with her to the timbered house, where he picked a hole in the bladder skin which covered the window, and laid the baby in the arms of the Viking's wife. This done, he flew home and told the mother stork all about it, and the young ones heard what he said; they were old enough to understand it.

"So you see that the Princess is not dead; she must have sent the baby up here, and I have found a home for her."

"I said so from the very first," said Mother Stork; "now just give a little attention to your own children; it is almost

time to start on our own journey. I feel a tingling in my wings every now and then! The cuckoo and the nightingale are already gone, and I hear from the quails that we shall soon have a good wind. Our young people will do themselves credit at the manœuvres if I know them aright!"

How delighted the Viking's wife was when she woke in the morning and found the little baby on her bosom! She kissed and caressed it; but it screamed and kicked terribly, and seemed anything but happy. At last it cried itself to sleep, and as it lay there a prettier little thing could not have been seen. The Viking's wife was delighted; body and soul were filled with joy. She was sure that now her husband and all his men would soon come back as unexpectedly as the baby had come. So she and her household busied themselves in putting the house in order against their return. The long coloured tapestries which she and her handmaids had woven with pictures of their gods — Odin, Thor, and Freya as they were called — were hung up. The serfs had to scour and polish the old shields which hung round the walls; cushions were laid on the benches, and logs upon the great hearth in the middle of the hall, so that the fire might be lighted at once. The Viking's wife helped with all this work herself, so that when evening came she was very tired and slept soundly. When she woke toward morning she was much alarmed at finding that the little baby had disappeared. She sprang up and lighted a pine chip and looked about. There was no baby, but at the foot of the bed sat a hideous toad. She was horrified at the sight, and seized up a heavy stick to kill it, but it looked at her with such curious sad eyes that she had not the heart to strike it. Once more she looked round and the toad gave a faint pitiful croak which made her start. She jumped out of bed and threw open the window shutter; the sun was just rising and its beams fell upon the bed and the great toad. All at once the monster's wide mouth seemed to contract, and to become small and rosy, the limbs stretched and again took

their lovely shapes, and it was her own dear little baby which lay there, and not a hideous frog.

“Whatever is this?” she cried; “I have had a bad dream. This is my own darling elfin child.” She kissed it and pressed it to her heart, but it struggled and bit like a wild kitten.

Neither that day nor the next did the Viking lord come home, although he was on his way, but the winds were against him; they were blowing southward for the storks. “It is an ill wind that blows nobody good.”

In the course of a few days and nights it became clear to the Viking's wife how matters stood with her little baby; some magic power had a terrible hold over her. In the day-time it was as beautiful as any fairy, but it had a bad, wicked temper; at night, on the other hand, she became a hideous toad, quiet and pathetic, with sad, mournful eyes. There were two natures in her both in soul and body continually shifting. The reason of it was that the little girl brought by the stork by day had her mother's form and her father's evil nature; but at night her kinship with him appeared in her outward form, and her mother's sweet nature and gentle spirit beamed out of the misshapen monster. Who could release her from the power of this witchcraft? It caused the Viking's wife much grief and trouble, and yet her heart yearned over the unfortunate being. She knew that she would never dare to tell her husband the true state of affairs, because he would without doubt, according to custom, have the poor child exposed on the highway for any one who chose to look after it. The good woman had not the heart to do this, and so she determined that he should only see the child by broad daylight.

One morning there was a sound of stork's wings swishing over the roof; during the night more than a hundred pairs of storks had made it their resting-place, after the great manœuvres, and they were now trying their wings before starting on their long southward flight.

"Every man ready!" they cried; "all the wives and children, too."

"How light we feel," cried the young storks; "our legs tingle as if we were full of live frogs! How splendid it is to be travelling to foreign lands."

"Keep in line!" said father and mother, "and don't let your beaks clatter so fast; it isn't good for the chest." Then away they flew.

At the very same moment a horn sounded over the heath. The Viking had landed with all his men; they were bringing home no end of rich booty from the Gallic coast, where the people cried in their terror as did the people of Britain:

"Deliver us from the wild Northmen!"

What life and noise came to the Viking's home by the Wild Bog now! The mead cask was brought into the hall, the great fire lighted, and horses slaughtered for the feast, which was to be an uproarious one. The priest sprinkled the thralls with the warm blood of the horses as a consecration. The fire crackled and roared, driving the smoke up under the roof, and the soot dripped down from the beams; but they were used to all that. Guests were invited and they received handsome presents. All feuds and double-dealing were forgotten. They drank deeply, and threw the knuckle-bones in each other's faces when they had gnawed them, but that was a mark of good feeling. The Skald—the minstrel of the times, but he was also a warrior, for he went with them on their expeditions, and he knew what he was singing about—gave them one of his ballads recounting all their warlike deeds and their prowess. After every verse came the same refrain: "Fortunes may be lost, friends may die, one dies one's self, but a glorious name never dies!" Then they banged on the shields, and hammered with knives or the knuckle-bones on the table before them, till the hall rang.

The Viking's wife sat on the cross bench in the banquetting hall. She was dressed in silk with gold bracelets and

large ember beads. The Skald brought her name into the song, too; he spoke of the golden treasure she had brought to her wealthy husband, and his delight at the beautiful child which at present he had only seen under its charming daylight guise. He rather admired her passionate nature, and said she would grow into a doughty shield maiden or Valkyrie, able to hold her own in battle. She would be of the kind who would not blink if a practised hand cut off her eyebrows in jest with a sharp sword. The barrel of mead came to an end, and a new one was rolled up in its place; this one, too, was soon drained to the dregs, but they were a hard-headed people who could stand a great deal. They had a proverb then, "The beast knows when it is time to go home from grass, but the fool never knows when he has had enough." They knew it very well, but people often know one thing and yet do another. They also knew that "the dearest friend becomes a bore if he sits too long in one's house!" but yet they sat on. Meat and drink are such good things! They were a jovial company! At night the thralls slept among the warm ashes, and they dipped their fingers in the sooty grease and licked them. Those were rare times indeed.

The Viking went out once more that year on a raid, although the autumn winds were beginning; he sailed with his men to the coast of Britain; "it was just over the water," he said. His wife remained at home with the little girl, and certain it was that the foster-mother soon grew fonder of the poor toad with the pathetic eyes and plaintive sighs than she was of the little beauty who tore and bit.

The raw, wet autumn fog "Gnaw-worm" which gnaws the leaves off the trees, lay over wood and heath; and "Bird loose-feather," as they call the snow, followed closely upon each other. Winter was on its way. The sparrows took the storks' nest under their protection, and discussed the absent owners in their own fashion. The stork couple and their young—where were they now?

The storks were in the land of Egypt under such a sun as we have on a warm summer's day! They were surrounded by flowering tamarinds and acacias. Mahomet's crescent glittered from every cupola on the mosques, and many a pair of storks stood on the slender towers resting after their long journey. Whole flocks of them had their nests side by side on the mighty pillars, or the ruined arches of the deserted temples. The date palm lifted high its screen of branches as if to form a sunshade. The grayish white pyramids stood like shadowy sketches against the clear atmosphere of the desert, where the ostrich knew it would find space for its stride. The lion crouched gazing with its great wise eyes at the marble Sphinx half buried in the sand. The Nile waters had receded and the land teemed with frogs; to the storks this was the most splendid sight in all the land. The eyes of the young ones were quite dazzled with the sight.

"See what it is to be here, and we always have the same in our warm country," said the mother stork, and the stomachs of the little ones tingled.

"Is there anything more to see?" they asked; "shall we go any farther inland?"

"There is not much more to see," said the mother stork. "On the fertile side there are only secluded woods where the trees are interlaced by creeping plants. The elephant, with its strong clumsy legs, is the only creature which can force a way through. The snakes there are too big for us, and the lizards are too nimble. If you go out into the desert you will get sand in your eyes if the weather is good, and if it is bad you may be buried in a sandstorm. No, we are best here; there are plenty of frogs and grasshoppers. Here I stay and you, too!" And so she stayed.

The old ones stayed in their nests on the slender minarets resting themselves, but at the same time busily smoothing their feathers and rubbing their beaks upon their red stockings. Or they would lift up their long necks and gravely

bow their heads, their brown eyes beaming wisely. The young stork misses walked about gravely among the juicy reeds, casting glances at the young bachelor storks, or making acquaintance with them; they would swallow a frog at every third step, or walk about with a small snake dangling from their beak; it had such a good effect, they thought, and then it tasted so good. The young he-storks engaged in many a petty quarrel, in which they flapped their wings furiously and stabbed each other with their beaks till the blood came. Then they took mates and built nests for themselves; it was what they lived for. New quarrels soon arose, for in these warm countries people are terribly passionate. All the same it was very pleasant to the old ones; nothing could be wrong that their young ones did. There was sunshine every day, and plenty to eat; nothing to think of but pleasure!

But in the great palace of their Egyptian host, as they called him, matters were not so pleasant. The rich and mighty lord lay stretched upon his couch, as stiff in every limb as if he had been a mummy. The great painted hall was as gorgeous as if he had been lying within a tulip. Relatives and friends stood around him — he was not dead — yet he could hardly be called living. The healing marsh flower from the northern lands, which was to be found and plucked by the one who loved him best, would never be brought. His young and lovely daughter, who in the plumage of a swan had flown over sea and land to the far north, would never return. The two other swan Princesses had come back and this is the tale they told:

“We were all flying high up in the air when a huntsman saw us and shot his arrow; it pierced our young friend to the heart, and she slowly sank. As she sank she sang her farewell song and fell into the midst of a forest pool. There by the shore under a drooping birch we buried her; but we had our revenge; we bound fire under the wings of a swallow which had its nest under the eaves of his cottage. The roof took fire and the cottage blazed up and he was burnt in it. The flames

shone on the pool where she lay, earth of the earth, under the birch. Never more will she come back to the land of Egypt."

Then they both wept, and the father stork who heard it clattered with his beak and said, "Pack of lies; I should like to drive my beak right into their breasts!"

"Where it would break off, and a nice sight you would be then," said the mother stork. "Think of yourself first and then of your family; everything else comes second to that!"

"I will perch upon the open cupola to-morrow when the wise and learned folk assemble to talk about the sick man; perhaps they will get a little nearer to the truth!"

The sages met together and talked long and learnedly, but the stork could neither make head nor tail of it. Nothing came of it, however, either for the sick man or for his daughter who was buried in the Wild Bog; but we may just as well hear what they said and we may, perhaps, understand the story better, or at least as well as the stork.

"Love is the food of life! The highest love nourishes the highest life! Only through love can this life be won back!" This had been said and well said, declared the sages.

"It is a beautiful idea!" said Father Stork at once.

"I don't rightly understand it," said the mother stork; "however, that is not my fault, but the fault of the idea. It really does not matter to me, though; I have other things to think about!"

The sages had talked a great deal about love, the difference between the love of lovers, and that of parent and child, light and vegetation, and how the sunbeams kissed the mire and forthwith young shoots sprang into being. The whole discourse was so learned that the father stork could not take it in, far less repeat it. He became quite pensive and stood on one leg for a whole day with his eyes half shut. Learning was a heavy burden to him.

Yet one thing the stork had thoroughly comprehended:

he had heard from high and low alike what a misfortune it was to thousands of people and to the whole country, that this man should be lying sick without hope of recovery. It would indeed be a blessed day which should see his health restored. "But where blossoms the flower of healing for him?" they had asked of one another, and they had also consulted all their learned writings, the twinkling stars, the winds and the waves. The only answer that the sages had been able to give was, "Love is the food of life!" but how to apply the saying they knew not. At last all were agreed that succour must come through the Princess who loved her father with her whole heart and soul. And they at last decided what she was to do. It was more than a year and a day since they had sent her at night, when there was a new moon, out into the desert to the Sphinx. Here she had to push away the sand from the door at the base of it, and walk through the long passage which led right into the middle of the pyramid, where one of the mightiest of their ancient kings lay swathed in his mummy's bands in the midst of his wealth and glory. Here she was to bend her head to the corpse, and it would be revealed to her where she would find healing and salvation for her father.

All this she had done, and the exact spot had been shown her in dreams where in the depths of the morass she would find the lotus flower that would touch her bosom beneath the water. And this she was to bring home. So she flew away in her swan's plumage to the Wild Bog in the far north.

Now all this the father and mother stork had known from the beginning, and we understand the matter better than we did. We know that the Marsh King dragged her down to himself, and that to those at home she was dead and gone. The wisest of them said like the mother stork, "She will look out for herself!" so they awaited her return, not knowing in fact what else to do.

"I think I will snatch away the swans' plumage from the

two deceitful Princesses," said the father stork. "Then they could not go to the Wild Bog to do any more mischief. I will keep the plumages up there till we find a use for them."

"Up where will you keep them?" asked the mother stork.

"In our nest at the Wild Bog," said he. "The young ones and I can carry them between us, and if they are too cumbersome, there are places enough on the way where we can hide them till our next flight. One plumage would be enough for her, but two are better; it is a good plan to have plenty of wraps in a northern country!"

"You will get no thanks for it," said the mother stork; "but you are the master. I have nothing to say except when I am sitting."

In the meantime the little child in the Viking's hall by the Wild Bog, whither the storks flew in the spring, had had a name given her: it was Helga, but such a name was far too gentle for such a wild spirit as dwelt within her. Month by month it showed itself more, and year by year, whilst the storks took the same journey, in autumn toward the Nile, and in spring toward the Wild Bog. The little child grew to be a big girl, and before one knew how, she was the loveliest maiden possible of sixteen. The husk was lovely but the kernel was hard and rough; wilder than most, even in those hard, wild times.

Her greatest pleasure was to dabble her white hands in the blood of the horses slaughtered for sacrifice; in her wild freaks she would bite the heads off the black cocks which the priest was about to slay, and she said in full earnest to her foster father, "If thy foe were to come and throw a rope round the beams of thy house and pull it about thine ears, I would not wake thee if I could. I should not hear him for the tingling of the blood in the ear thou once boxed years ago! I do not forget!"

But the Viking did not believe what she said. He, like everybody else, was infatuated by her beauty, nor did he

know how body and soul changed places in his little Helga in the dark hours of the night. She rode a horse bare-backed as if she were a part of it, nor did she jump off while her steed bit and fought with the other wild horses. She would often throw herself from the cliff into the sea in all her clothes, and swim out to meet the Viking when his boat neared the shore; and she cut off the longest strand of her beautiful long hair to string her bow. "Self made is well made," said she.

The Viking's wife, though strong-willed and strong-minded after the fashion of the times, became toward her daughter like any other weak anxious mother, because she knew that a spell rested over the terrible child. Often when her mother stepped out on to the balcony Helga, from pure love of teasing it seemed, would sit down upon the edge of the well, throw up her hands and feet, and go backward plump into the dark narrow hole. Here with her frog's nature she would rise again and clamber out like a cat dripping with water, carrying a perfect stream into the banqueting hall, washing aside the green twigs strewn on the floor.

One bond, however, always held little Helga in check, and that was twilight; when it drew near, she became quiet and pensive, allowing herself to be called and directed. An inner perception as it were drew her toward her mother, and when the sun sank and the transformation took place, she sat sad and quiet, shrivelled up into the form of a toad. Her body was now much bigger than those creatures ever are, but for that reason all the more unsightly. She looked like a wretched dwarf with the head of a frog and webbed fingers. There was something so piteous in her eyes; and voice she had none, only a hollow croak like the smothered sobs of a dreaming child. Then the Viking's wife would take it on her knee, and looking into its eyes would forget the misshapen form, and would often say, "I could almost wish that thou wouldst always remain my dumb frog-child. Thou art more terrible

to look at when thou art clothed in beauty." Then she would write Runes against sickness and sorcery, and throw them over the miserable girl, but they did no good at all.

"One would never think that she had been small enough to lie in a water lily!" said the father stork. "Now she is grown up, and the very image of her Egyptian mother, whom we never saw again! She did not manage to take such good care of herself as you and the sages said she would. I have been flying across the marsh year in, year out, and never have I seen a trace of her. Yes, I may as well tell you that all these years when I have come on in advance of you to look after the nest and set it to rights, I have spent many a night flying about like an owl or a bat scanning the open water, but all to no purpose. Nor have we had any use for the two swan plumages which the young ones and I dragged up here with so much difficulty; it took us three journeys to get them here. They have lain for years in the bottom of the nest, and if ever a disaster happens, such as a fire in the timbered house, they will be entirely lost."

"And our good nest would be lost too," said the mother stork; "but you think less of that than you do of your feather dresses, and your marsh Princess. You had better go down to her one day and stay in the mire for good. You are a bad father to your own chicks, and I have always said so since the first time I hatched a brood. If only we or the young ones don't get an arrow through our wings from that mad Viking girl. She doesn't know what she is about. We are rather more at home here than she is, and she ought to remember that. We never forget our obligations. Every year we pay our toll of a feather, an egg, and a young one, as it is only right we should. Do you think that while she is about I care to go down there as I used to do, and as I do in Egypt when I am 'hail fellow well met' with everybody, and where I peep into their pots and kettles if I like? No, indeed; I sit up here vexing myself about her, the vixen, and you too. You should have

left her in the water lily, and there would have been an end of her."

"You are much more estimable than your words," said the father stork. "I know you better than you know yourself, my dear." Then he gave a hop and flapped his wings thrice, proudly stretched out his neck and soared away without moving his outspread wings. When he had gone some distance he made some more powerful strokes, his head and neck bending proudly forward, while his plumage gleamed in the sunshine. What strength and speed there were in his flight!

"He is the handsomest of them all yet," said the mother stork; "but I don't tell him that."

The Viking came home early that autumn with his booty and prisoners; among these was a young Christian priest, one of those men who persecuted the heathen gods of the north. There had often been discussions of late, both in the hall and in the women's bower, about the new faith which was spreading in all the countries to the south. Through the holy Ansgarius it had spread as far as Hedeby on the Schlei. Even little Helga had heard of the belief in the "White Christ," who from love to man had given Himself for their salvation. As far as Helga was concerned it had all gone in at one ear and out at the other, as one says. The very meaning of the word "love" only seemed to dawn upon her when she was shrivelled up into the form of a frog in her secret chamber, but the Viking's wife had listened to the story and had felt herself strangely moved by these tales about the Son of the only true God.

The men on their return from their raids told them all about the temples built of costly polished stone, which were raised to Him whose message was Love. Once a couple of heavy golden vessels of cunning workmanship were brought home about which hung a peculiar spicy odour. They were censers used by the Christian priests to swing before the altars on which blood never flowed, but where the bread and wine

were changed to the Body and Blood of Him who gave Himself for the yet unborn generations.

The young priest was imprisoned in the deep stone cellars of the timber house and his feet and hands were bound with strips of bark. He was as "beautiful as Baldur," said the Viking's wife, and she felt pity for him, but young Helga proposed that he should be hamstrung and be tied to the tails of wild oxen.

"Then would I let the dogs loose on him. He and away over marshes and pools; that would be a merry sight, and merrier still would it be to follow in his course."

However, this was not the death the Viking wished him to die, but rather that, as a denier and a persecutor of the great gods, he should be offered up in the morning upon the bloodstone in the groves. For the first time a man was to be sacrificed here. Young Helga begged that she might sprinkle the effigies of the gods and the people with his blood. She polished her sharp knife, and when one of the great ferocious dogs, of which there were so many about the place, sprang toward her, she dug her knife into its side, "to try it," she said; but the Viking's wife looked sadly at the wild, badly disposed girl. When the night came and the girl's beauty of body and soul changed places, she spoke tender words of grief from her sorrowful heart. The ugly toad with its ungainly body stood fixing its sad brown eyes upon her, listening and seeming to understand with the mind of a human being.

"Never once to my husband has a word of my double grief through you passed my lips," said the Viking's wife. "My heart is full of grief for you, great is a mother's love! But love never entered your heart; it is like a lump of cold clay. However did you get into my house?"

Then the ungainly creature trembled, as if the words touched some invisible chord between body and soul, and great tears came into its eyes.

"A bitter time will come to you," said the Viking's wife,

“and it will be a terrible one to me, too! Better would it have been, if as a child you had been exposed on the highway, and lulled by the cold to the sleep of death!” And the Viking’s wife shed bitter tears, and went away in anger and sorrow, passing under the curtain of skins which hung from the beams and divided the hall.

The shrivelled-up toad crouched in the corner, and a dead silence reigned. At intervals a half-stifled sigh rose within her; it was as if in anguish something came to life in her heart. She took a step forward and listened, then she stepped forward again and grasped the heavy bar of the door with her clumsy hands. Softly she drew it back, and silently lifted the latch; then she took up the lamp which stood in the ante-room. It seemed as if a strong power gave her strength. She drew out the iron bolt from the barred cellar door, and slipped in to the prisoner. He was asleep; she touched him with her cold clammy hand, and when he woke and saw the hideous creature, he shuddered as if he beheld an evil apparition. She drew out her knife and cut his bonds asunder, and then beckoned him to follow her. He named the Holy name, and made the sign of the cross, and as the form remained unchanged, he repeated the words of the Psalmist: “Blessed is the man who hath pity on the poor and needy; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble!” Then he asked, “Who art thou, whose outward appearance is that of an animal, whilst thou willingly performest deeds of mercy?”

The toad only beckoned him and led him behind the sheltering curtains down a long passage to the stable, pointed to a horse, on to which he sprang and she after him. She sat in front of him clutching the mane of the animal. The prisoner understood her and they rode at a quick pace along a path he never would have found to the heath. He forgot her hideous form, knowing that the mercy of the Lord worked through the spirits of darkness. He prayed and sang holy songs which made her tremble. Was it the power of prayer

and his singing working upon her, or was it the chill air of the advancing dawn? What were her feelings? She raised herself and wanted to stop and jump off the horse, but the Christian priest held her tightly, with all his strength, and sang aloud a psalm as if this could lift the spell which held her.

The horse bounded on more wildly than before, the sky grew red, and the first sunbeams pierced the clouds. As the stream of light touched her, the transformation took place. She was once more a lovely maiden, but her demoniac spirit was the same. The priest held a blooming maiden in his arms and he was terrified at the sight. He stopped the horse and sprang down, thinking he had met with a new device of the evil one. But young Helga sprang to the ground too. The short child's frock only reached to her knee. She tore the sharp knife from her belt and rushed upon the startled man. "Let me get at thee!" she cried; "let me reach thee and my knife shall pierce thee! Thou art ashen pale, beardless slave!"

She closed upon him and they wrestled together, but an invisible power seemed to give strength to the Christian; he held her tight, and the old oak under which they stood seemed to help him, for the loosened roots above the ground tripped her up. Close by rose a bubbling spring and he sprinkled her with water and commanded the unclean spirit to leave her, making the sign of the cross over her according to Christian usage. But the baptismal water has no power if the spring of faith flows not from within. Yet even here something more than man's strength opposed itself, through him, against the evil which struggled within her. Her arms fell, and she looked with astonishment and paling cheeks at this man who seemed to be a mighty magician skilled in secret arts. These were dark Runes he was repeating and cabalistic signs he was tracing in the air. She would not have blanched had he flourished a shining sword or a sharp axe before her face, but she trembled now as he traced the sign of the cross upon her forehead and



The great dragon, hoarding his treasures, raised his head to look at them

bosom, and sat before him with drooping head like a wild bird tamed.

He spoke gently to her about the deed of love she had performed for him this night, when she came in the hideous shape of a toad, cut his bonds asunder, and led him out to light and life. She herself was bound, he said, and with stronger bonds than his; but she also, through him, should reach to light and life everlasting. He would take her to Hedeby to the holy Ansgarius, and there, in that Christian city, the spell would be removed; but she must no longer sit in front of him on the horse, even if she went of her own free will; he dared not carry her thus.

“Thou must sit behind me, not before me; thy magic beauty has a power given by the Evil One which I dread; yet shall I have the victory through Christ!”

He knelt down and prayed humbly and earnestly. It seemed as if the quiet wood became a holy church consecrated by his worship. The birds began to sing as if they too were also of this new congregation, and the fragrance of the wild flowers was as the ambrosial perfume of incense, while the young priest recited the words of Holy Writ: “The Day-spring from on high hath visited us. To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace.”

He spoke of the yearning of all nature for redemption, and while he spoke the horse which had carried them stood quietly by, only rustling among the bramble-bushes, making the ripe, juicy fruit fall into little Helga's hands, as if inviting her to refresh herself. Patiently she allowed herself to be lifted on to the horse's back, and sat there like one in a trance, who neither watches nor wonders. The Christian man bound together two branches in the shape of a cross, which he held aloft in his hand as he rode through the wood. The brushwood grew thicker and thicker, till at last it became a trackless wilderness. Bushes of the wild sloe blocked the way, and

they had to ride round them. The bubbling springs turned to standing pools, and these they also had to ride round; still, they found strength and refreshment in the pure breezes of the forest, and no less a power in the tender words of faith and love spoken by the young priest in his fervent desires to lead this poor straying one into the way of light and love.

It is said that raindrops can wear a hollow in the hardest stone, and the waves of the sea can smooth and round the jagged rocks; so did the dew of mercy, falling upon little Helga, soften all that was hard, and smooth all that was rough in her. Not that these effects were yet to be seen; she did not even know that they had taken place, any more than the buried seed lying in the earth knows that the refreshing showers and the warm sunbeams will cause it to flourish and bloom.

As the mother's song unconsciously falls upon the child's heart, it stammers the words after her without understanding them; but later they crystallize into thoughts, and in time become clear. In this way the "Word" also worked here in the heart of Helga.

They rode out of the wood, over a heath, and again through trackless forests. Toward evening they met a band of robbers.

"Where hast thou stolen this beautiful child?" they cried, stopping the horse and pulling down the two riders, for they were a numerous party.

The priest had no weapon but the knife which he had taken from little Helga, and with this he struck out right and left. One of the robbers raised his axe to strike him, but the Christian succeeded in springing on one side, or he would certainly have been hit; but the blade flew into the horse's neck, so that the blood gushed forth, and it fell to the ground dead. Then little Helga, as if roused from a long deep trance, rushed forward and threw herself on to the gasping horse. The priest placed himself in front of her as a shield and defence; but one of the robbers swung his iron club with such

force at his head that the blood and the brains were scattered about, and he fell dead upon the ground.

The robbers seized little Helga by her white arms, but the sun was just going down, and as the last rays vanished she was changed into the form of a frog. A greenish white mouth stretched half over her face; her arms became thin and slimy; while broad hands, with webbed fingers, spread themselves out like fans. The robbers in terror let her go, and she stood among them a hideous monster; and, according to frog nature, she bounded away with great leaps as high as herself, and disappeared in the thicket. Then the robbers perceived that this must be Loki's evil spirit or some other witchcraft, and they hurried away affrighted.

The full moon had risen and was shining in all its splendour when poor little Helga, in the form of a frog, crept out of the thicket. She stopped by the body of the Christian priest and the dead horse; she looked at them with eyes which seemed to weep; a sob came from the toad like that of a child bursting into tears. She threw herself down, first upon one, and then on the other, and brought water in her hand, which, from being large and webbed, formed a cup. This she sprinkled them with, but they were dead, and dead they must remain! This she understood. Soon wild animals would come and devour them; but no, that should never be; so she dug into the ground as deep as she could; she wished to dig a grave for them. She had nothing but the branch of a tree and her two hands, and she tore the web between her fingers till the blood ran from them. She soon saw that the task would be beyond her, so she fetched fresh water and washed the face of the dead man, and strewed fresh green leaves over it. She also brought large boughs to cover him, and scattered dried leaves between the branches. Then she brought the heaviest stones she could carry, and laid them over the dead body, filling up the spaces with moss. Now she thought the mound was strong and secure enough, but the difficult task had employed the whole night; the sun

was just rising, and there stood little Helga in all her beauty with bleeding hands and maidenly tears for the first time on her blushing cheeks.

It was in this transformation as if two natures were struggling in her; she trembled and glanced round as if she were just awakening from a troubled dream. She leaned for support against a slender beech, and at last climbed to the topmost branches like a cat and seated herself firmly upon them. She sat there for the whole livelong day like a frightened squirrel in the solitude of the wood where all is still, and dead, as they say.

Dead — well, there flew a couple of butterflies whirling round and round each other, and close by were some ant-hills, each with its hundreds of busy little creatures swarming to and fro. In the air danced countless midges, and swarm upon swarm of flies, lady-birds, dragon-flies with golden wings, and other little winged creatures. The earthworm crept forth from the moist ground, and the moles — but excepting these all was still and dead around; when people say this they don't quite understand what they mean. None noticed little Helga but a flock of jackdaws which flew chattering round the tree where she sat. They hopped along the branch toward her, boldly inquisitive, but a glance from her eye was enough to drive them away. They could not make her out, though, any more than she could understand herself.

When the evening drew near and the sun began to sink, the approaching transformation roused her to fresh exertion. She slipped down gently from the tree, and when the last sun-beam was extinguished she sat there once more, the shrivelled-up frog with her torn, webbed hands; but her eyes now shone with a new beauty which they had hardly possessed in all the pride of her loveliness. These were the gentlest and tenderest maiden's eyes which now shone out of the face of the frog. They bore witness to the existence of deep feeling and a human heart; and the beauteous eyes overflowed with tears, weeping precious drops that lightened the heart.

The cross made of branches, the last work of him who now was dead and cold, still lay by the grave. Little Helga took it up, the thought came unconsciously, and she placed it between the stones which covered man and horse. At the sad recollection her tears burst forth again, and in this mood she traced the same sign in the earth round the grave — and as she formed with both hands the sign of the cross, the webbed skin fell away from her fingers like a torn glove. She washed her hands at the spring and gazed in astonishment at their delicate whiteness. Again she made the holy sign in the air, between herself and the dead man; her lips trembled, her tongue moved, and the name which she in her ride through the forest had so often heard rose to her lips, and she uttered the words “Jesus Christ.”

The frog's skin fell away from her; she was the beautiful young maiden, but her head bent wearily and her limbs required rest. She slept. But her sleep was short; she was awakened at midnight; before her stood the dead horse prancing and full of life, which shone forth from his eyes and his wounded neck. Close by his side appeared the murdered Christian priest, “more beautiful than Baldur,” the Viking's wife might indeed have said, and yet he was surrounded by flames of fire.

There was such earnestness in his large, mild eyes, and such righteous judgment in his penetrating glance which pierced into the remotest corners of her heart, that little Helga trembled, and every memory within her was awakened as if it had been the day of Judgment. Every kindness which had ever been shown her, every loving word which had been said to her, came vividly before her. She now understood that it was love which had sustained her in those days of trial, through which all creatures formed of dust and clay, soul and spirit, must wrestle and struggle. She acknowledged that she had but followed whither she was called, had done nothing for herself; all had been given her. She bent now in lowly humility, and full of shame, before Him who could read every impulse of her heart; and in

that moment she felt the purifying flame of the Holy Spirit thrill through her soul.

“Thou daughter of earth!” said the Christian martyr, “out of the earth art thou come, from the earth shalt thou rise again! The sunlight within thee shall consciously return to its origin; not the beams of the actual sun, but those from God! No soul will be lost, things temporal are full of weariness, but eternity is life-giving. I come from the land of the dead; thou also must one day journey through the deep valleys to reach the radiant mountain summits where dwell grace and all perfection. I cannot lead thee to Hedeby for Christian baptism; first must thou break the watery shield that covers the deep morass, and bring forth from its depths the living author of thy being and thy life; thou must first carry out thy vocation before thy consecration may take place!”

Then he lifted her up on to the horse, and gave her a golden censer like those she had seen in the Viking's hall. A fragrant perfume arose from it, and the open wound on the martyr's forehead gleamed like a radiant diadem. He took the cross from the grave, holding it high above him, while they rode rapidly through the air, across the murmuring woods, and over the heights where the mighty warriors of old lay buried, each seated on his dead war-horse. These strong men of war arose and rode out to the summits of the mounds; the broad golden circlets round their foreheads gleaming in the moonlight and their cloaks fluttering in the wind. The great dragon hoarding his treasure raised his head to look at them, and whole hosts of dwarfs peeped forth from their hillocks, swarming with red, green, and blue lights, like sparks from the ashes of burnt paper.

Away they flew over wood and heath, rivers and pools, up north toward the Wild Bog; arrived here, they hovered round in great circles. The martyr raised high the cross; it shone like gold, and his lips chanted the holy mass. Little Helga sang with him as a child joins in its mother's song. She

swung the censer, and from it issued a fragrance of the altar so strong and so wonder-working that the reeds and rushes burst into blossom, and numberless flower stems shot up from the bottomless depths; everything that had life within it lifted itself up and blossomed. The water lilies spread themselves over the surface of the pool like a carpet of wrought flowers, and on this carpet lay a sleeping woman. She was young and beautiful; little Helga fancied she saw herself, her picture mirrored in the quiet pool. It was her mother she saw, the wife of the Marsh King, the princess from the river Nile.

The martyred priest commanded the sleeping woman to be lifted up on to the horse, but the animal sank beneath the burden, as though it had no more substance than a winding-sheet floating on the wind; but the sign of the cross gave strength to the phantom, and all three rode on through the air to dry ground. Just then the cock crew from the Viking's hall, and the vision melted away in the mist which was driven along by the wind, but mother and daughter stood side by side.

"Is it myself I see reflected in the deep water?" said the mother.

"Do I see myself mirrored in a bright shield?" said the daughter. But as they approached and clasped each other heart to heart, the mother's heart beat the faster, and she understood.

"My child! my own heart's blossom! my lotus out of the deep waters!" and she wept over her daughter; her tears were a new baptism of love and life for little Helga. "I came hither in a swan's plumage, and here I threw it off," said the mother. "I sank down into the bog, which closed around me. Some power always dragged me down, deeper and deeper. I felt the hand of sleep pressing upon my eyelids. I fell asleep, and I dreamt—I seemed to be again in the vast Egyptian Pyramid; but still before me stood the moving alder stump which had frightened me on the surface of the bog. I gazed at the fissures of the bark and they shone out in bright colours

and turned to hieroglyphs; it was the mummy's wrappings I was looking at. The coverings burst asunder, and out of them walked the mummy king of a thousand years ago, black as pitch, black as the shining wood-snail or the slimy mud of the swamp. Whether it were the Mummy King or the Marsh King I knew not. He threw his arms around me, and I felt that I must die. When life came back to me I felt something warm upon my bosom; a little bird fluttering its wings and twittering. It flew from my bosom high up toward the heavy dark canopy, but a long green ribbon still bound it to me; I heard and understood its notes of longing: 'Freedom! Sunshine! To the Father!' I remembered my own father in the sunlit land of my home, my life and my love! and I loosened the ribbon and let it flutter away — home to my father. Since that hour I have dreamt no more; I must have slept a long and heavy sleep till this hour, when sweet music and fragrant odours awoke me and set me free."

Where did now the green ribbon flutter which bound the mother's heart to the wings of the bird? Only the stork had seen it. The ribbon was the green stem, the bow the gleaming flower which cradled the little baby, now grown up to her full beauty, and once more resting on her mother's breast. While they stood there, pressed heart to heart, the stork was wheeling above their heads in great circles; at length he flew away to his nest and brought back the swan plumages so long cherished there. He threw one over each of them; the feathers closed over them closely, and mother and daughter rose into the air as two white swans.

"Now let us talk!" said the father stork; "for we can understand each other's language, even if one sort of bird has a different-shaped beak from another. It is the most fortunate thing in the world that you appeared this evening. To-morrow we should have been off, mother and I and the young ones. We are going to fly southward. Yes, you may look at me! I am an old friend from the Nile, so is mother,

too; her heart is not so sharp as her beak! She always said that the Princess would take care of herself! I and the young ones carried the swans' plumage up here! How delighted I am, and how lucky it is that I am still here; as soon as the day dawns we will set off, a great company of storks. We will fly in front, you had better follow us and then you won't lose your way, and we will keep an eye upon you."

"And the lotus flower which I was to take with me," said the Egyptian Princess, "flies by my side in a swan's plumage. I take the flower of my heart with me, and so the riddle is solved. Now for home! home!"

But Helga said she could not leave the Danish land without seeing her loving foster-mother once more, the Viking's wife. For in Helga's memory now rose up every happy recollection, every tender word and every tear her foster-mother had shed over her, and it almost seemed as if she loved this mother best.

"Yes, we must go to the Viking's hall," said the father stork; "mother and the young ones are waiting for us there. How they will open their eyes and flap their wings! Mother doesn't say much; she is somewhat short and abrupt, but she means very well. Now I will make a great clattering to let them know we are coming!"

So he clattered with his beak, and he and the swans flew off to the Viking's hall.

They all lay in a deep sleep within; the Viking's wife had gone late to rest, for she was in great anxiety about little Helga, who had not been seen for three days. She had disappeared with the Christian priest, and she must have helped him away; it was her horse which was missing from the stable. By what power had this been brought to pass? The Viking's wife thought over all the many miracles which were said to have been performed by the "White Christ," and by those who believed in Him and followed Him. All these thoughts took form in her dreams, and it seemed to her that she was still

awake, sitting thoughtfully upon her bed while darkness reigned without. A storm arose; she heard the rolling of the waves east and west of her from the North Sea, and from the waters of the Cattegat. The monstrous serpent which, according to her faith, encompassed the earth in the depths of the ocean, was trembling in convulsions from dread of "Ragnarok," the knight of the gods. He personified the day of Judgment when everything should pass away, even the great gods themselves. The Gialler horn sounded, and away over the rainbow rode the gods, clad in steel to fight their last battle; before them flew the shield maidens, the Valkyries, and the ranks were closed by the phantoms of the dead warriors. The whole atmosphere shone in the radiance of the northern lights, but darkness conquered in the end. It was a terrible hour, and in her dream little Helga sat close beside the frightened woman, crouching on the floor in the form of the hideous frog. She trembled and crept closer to her foster-mother, who took her on her knee, and in her love pressed her to her bosom, notwithstanding the hideous frog's skin. And the air resounded with the clashing of sword and club, and the whistling of arrows as though a fierce hailstorm were passing over them. The hour had come when heaven and earth were to pass away, the stars to fall, and everything to succumb to Surtur's fire — and yet a new earth and a new heaven would arise, and fields of corn would wave where the seas now rolled over the golden sands. The God whom none might name would reign, and to Him would ascend Baldur the mild, the loving, redeemed from the kingdom of the dead — he was coming — the Viking's wife saw him plainly, she knew his face — it was that of the Christian priest, their prisoner. "White Christ," she cried aloud, and as she named the name she pressed a kiss upon the forehead of the loathsome toad; the frog's skin fell away, and before her stood little Helga in all the radiance of her beauty, gentle as she had never been before, and with beaming eyes. She kissed her foster-mother's hands, and blessed her for all

the care and love she had shown in the days of her trial and misery. She thanked her for the thoughts she had instilled into her, and for naming the name which she now repeated, "White Christ!" Little Helga rose up as a great white swan and spread her wings with the rushing sound of a flock of birds of passage on the wing.

The Viking's wife was wakened by the rushing sound of wings outside; she knew it was the time when the storks took their flight, and it was these she heard. She wanted to see them once more and to bid them farewell, so she got up and went out on to the balcony; she saw stork upon stork sitting on the roofs of the outbuildings round the courtyard, and flocks of them were flying round and round in great circles. Just in front of her, on the edge of the well where little Helga so often had frightened her with her wildness, sat two white swans, who gazed at her with their wise eyes. Then she remembered her dream, which still seemed quite real to her. She thought of little Helga in the form of a swan. She thought of the Christian priest, and suddenly a great joy arose in her heart. The swans flapped their wings and bent their heads, as if to greet her, and the Viking's wife stretched out her arms toward them as if she understood all about it, and she smiled at them with tears in her eyes.

"We are not going to wait for the swans," said the mother stork; "if they want to travel with us they must come. We can't dawdle here till the plovers start! It is very nice to travel as we do, the whole family together, not like the chaffinches and the ruffs, when the males and females fly separately; it's hardly decent! And why are those swans flapping their wings like that?"

"Well, every one flies in his own way," said the father stork. "The swans fly in an oblique line, the cranes in the form of a triangle, and the plovers in a curved line like a snake."

"Don't talk about snakes while we are flying up here,"

said the mother stork. "It puts desires into the young ones' heads which they can't gratify."

"Are those the high mountains I used to hear about?" asked Helga in the swan's plumage.

"Those are thunder clouds driving along beneath us," said her mother.

"What are those white clouds that rise so high?" again inquired Helga.

"Those are mountains covered with perpetual snows that you see yonder," said her mother, as they flew across the Alps down toward the blue Mediterranean.

"Africa's land! Egypt's strand!" sang the daughter of the Nile in her joy, as from far above, in her swan's plumage, her eye fell upon the narrow waving yellow line, her birthplace. The other birds saw it, too, and hastened their flight.

"I smell the Nile mud and the frogs," said the mother stork. "I am tingling all over. Now, you will have something nice to taste, and something to see, too. There are the marabouts, the ibis, and the crane. They all belong to our family, but they are not nearly so handsome as we are; they are very stuck up, though, especially the ibis, they have been so spoilt by the Egyptians. They make mummies of him, and stuff him with spices. I would rather be stuffed with living frogs, and so would you, and so you shall be! Better have something in your crops while you are alive than have a great fuss made over you after you are dead. That is my opinion, and I am always right."

"The storks have come back," was said in the great house on the Nile, where its lord lay in the great hall on his downy cushions covered with a leopard skin, scarcely alive, and yet not dead either, waiting and hoping for the lotus flower from the deep morass in the north.

Relatives and servants stood round his couch, when two great white swans who had come with the storks flew into the hall. They threw off their dazzling plumage, and there



“The Day-spring from on high hath visited us. To give light to them that sit in darkness, and to guide their feet into the way of peace”

stood two beautiful women as like each other as twin drops of dew. They bent over the pale, withered old man, throwing back their long hair.

As little Helga bent over her grandfather, the colour came back to his cheeks and new life returned to his limbs. The old man rose with health and energy renewed; his daughter and granddaughter clasped him in their arms, as if with a joyous morning greeting after a long troubled night.

Joy reigned throughout the house and in the stork's nest, too, but there the rejoicing was chiefly over the abundance of food, especially the swarms of frogs. And while the sages hastily sketched the story of the two Princesses and the flower of healing, which brought such joy and blessing to the land, the parent storks told the same story in their own way to their family; but only when they had all satisfied their appetites, or they would have had something better to do than to listen to stories.

"Surely you will be made something at last," whispered the mother stork. "It wouldn't be reasonable otherwise."

"Oh, what should I be made?" said the father stork; "and what have I done? Nothing at all!"

"You have done more than all the others! Without you and the young ones the two Princesses would never have seen Egypt again, nor would the old man have recovered his health. You will become something. They will at least give you a doctor's degree, and our young ones will be born with the title, and their young ones after them. Why, you look like an Egyptian doctor already, at least in my eyes!"

And now the learned men and the sages set to work to propound the inner principle, as they called it, that lay at the root of the matter. "Love is the food of life," was their text. Then came the explanations. "The Princess was the warm sunbeam, she went down to the Marsh King, and from their meeting sprang forth the blossom."

"I can't exactly repeat the words," said the father stork.

He had been listening on the roof, and now wanted to tell them all about it in the nest. "What they said was so involved and so clever that they not only received rank, but presents, too; even the head cook had a mark of distinction — most likely for the soup!"

"And what did you get?" asked the mother stork. "They ought not to forget the most important person, and that is what you are; the sages have only cackled about it all. But your turn will come, no doubt!"

Late at night, when the whole happy household were wrapped in peaceful slumbers, there was still one watcher. It was not Father Stork, although he stood up in the nest on one leg like a sentry asleep at his post. No, it was little Helga. She was watching, bending out over the balcony in the clear air, gazing at the shining stars, bigger and purer in their radiance than she had ever seen them in the north; and yet they were the same. She thought of the Viking's wife by the Wild Bog; she thought of her foster-mother's gentle eyes, and the tears she had shed over the poor frog-child, who now stood in the bright starlight and delicious spring air by the waters of the Nile. She thought of the love in the heathen woman's breast, the love she had lavished on a miserable creature, who in human guise was a wild animal, and when in the form of an animal was hateful to the sight and to the touch. She looked at the shining stars, and remembered the dazzling light on the forehead of the martyred priest as he flew over moorland and forest. The tones of his voice came back to her, and words that he had said while she sat overwhelmed and crushed — words concerning the sublime source of love, the highest love embracing all generations of mankind. What had not been won and achieved by this love? Day and night little Helga was absorbed in the thought of her happiness; she entirely lost herself in the contemplation of it, like a child who turns hurriedly from the giver to examine the beautiful gifts. Happy she was, indeed, and her happiness seemed ever growing; more might come,

would come. In these thoughts she indulged, until she thought no more of the Giver. It was in the wantonness of youth that she thus sinned. Her eyes sparkled with pride, but suddenly she was roused from her vain dream. She heard a great clatter in the courtyard below, and, looking out, saw two great ostriches rushing hurriedly round in circles; never before had she seen this great, heavy, clumsy bird, which looked as if its wings had been clipped, and the birds themselves had the appearance of having been roughly used. She asked what had happened to them, and for the first time heard the legend the Egyptians tell concerning the ostrich.

Once, they say, the ostriches were a beautiful and glorious race of birds, with large, strong wings. One evening the great birds of the forest said to it, "Brother, shall we to-morrow, God willing, go down to the river to drink?" And the ostrich answered, "I will!"

At the break of day, then, they flew off, first rising high in the air toward the sun, the eye of God; still higher and higher the ostrich flew, far in front of the other birds, in its pride flying close up to the light. He trusted in his own strength, and not on that of the Giver; he would not say "God willing!" But the venging angel drew back the veil from the flaming ocean of sunlight, and in a moment the wings of the proud bird were burnt, and he sank miserably to the earth. Since that time the ostrich and his race have never been able to rise in the air; he can only fly terror-stricken along the ground, or round and round in narrow circles. It is a warning to mankind, reminding us in every thought and action to say "God willing!"

Helga thoughtfully and seriously bent her head and looked at the hunted ostrich, noticed its fear and its miserable pride at the sight of its own great shadow on the white moonlit wall. Her thoughts grew graver and more earnest. A life so rich in joy had already been given her; what more was to come? The best of all perhaps — "God willing!"

Early in the spring, when the storks were again about to

take flight to the north, little Helga took off her gold bracelet, and, scratching her name on it, beckoned to Father Stork and put it round his neck. She told him to take it to the Viking's wife, who would see by it that her foster-daughter still lived, was happy, and had not forgotten her.

"It is a heavy thing to carry!" thought Father Stork, as it slipped on to his neck; "but neither gold nor honour are to be thrown upon the highway! The stork brings good luck, they say up there!"

"You lay gold, and I lay eggs," said Mother Stork; "but you only lay once and I lay every year. But no one appreciates us; I call it very mortifying!"

"One always has the consciousness of one's own worth, though, mother!" said Father Stork.

"But you can't hang it outside," said Mother Stork; "it neither gives a fair wind nor a full meal!" And they took their departure.

The little nightingale singing in the tamarind bushes was also going north soon; Helga had often heard it singing by the Wild Bog, so she determined to send a message by it, too. She knew the bird language from having worn a swan's plumage, and she had kept it up by speaking to the storks and the swallows. The nightingale understood her quite well, so she begged it to fly to the beechwood in Jutland, where she had made the grave of stones and branches; she bade it tell all the other little birds to guard the grave and to sing over it. The nightingale flew away — and time flew away too.

In the autumn an eagle perched on one of the Pyramids, saw a gorgeous train of heavily laden camels and men clad in armour riding fiery Arab steeds as white as silver with quivering red nostrils and flowing manes reaching to the ground. A royal prince from Arabia, as handsome as a prince should be, was arriving at the stately mansion where now even the stork's nest stood empty; its inhabitants were still in their northern home; but they would soon now return — nay, on the very day

when the rejoicings were at their height they returned. They were bridal festivities and little Helga was the bride clad in rich silk and many jewels. The bridegroom was the young prince from Arabia, and they sat together at the upper end of the table, between her mother and her grandfather.

But Helga was not looking at the bridegroom's handsome face round which his black beard curled, nor did she look into his fiery dark eyes which were fixed upon hers. She was gazing up at a brilliant twinkling star which was beaming in the heavens.

Just then there was a rustle of great wings in the air outside; the storks had come back. And the old couple, tired as they were and needing rest, flew straight down to the railing of the veranda; they knew nothing about the festivities. They had heard on the frontiers of the country that little Helga had had them painted on the wall, for they belonged to the story of her life.

"It was prettily done of her," said Father Stork.

"It is little enough," said Mother Stork; "they could hardly do less."

When Helga saw them she rose from the table and went out on to the veranda to stroke their wings. The old storks bowed their heads and the very youngest ones looked on and felt honoured. And Helga looked up at the shining star which seemed to grow brighter and purer; between herself and the star floated a form purer even than the air and therefore visible to her. It floated quite close to her and she saw that it was the martyred priest; he also had come to her great festival — come even from the heavenly kingdom.

"The glory and bliss yonder far outshines these earthly splendours," he said.

Little Helga prayed more earnestly and meekly than she had ever done before, that for one single moment she might gaze into the kingdom of Heaven. Then she felt herself lifted up above the earth in a stream of sweet sounds and thoughts.

The unearthly music was not only around her, it was within her. No words can express it.

“Now we must return; you will be missed,” said the martyr.

“Only one glance more,” she pleaded; “only one short moment more.”

“We must return to earth; the guests are departing.”

“Only one look — the last.”

Little Helga stood once again on the veranda, but all the torches outside were extinguished and the lights in the banqueting hall were out, too; the storks were gone; no guests were to be seen; no bridegroom — all had vanished in those short three minutes.

A great dread seized upon Helga; she walked through the great empty hall into the next chamber where strange warriors were sleeping. She opened a side door which led into her own room, but she found herself in a garden, which had never been there before. Red gleams were in the sky, dawn was approaching. Only three minutes in Heaven, and a whole night on earth had passed away.

Then she saw the storks; she called to them in her own language. Father Stork turned his head, listened, and came up to her.

“You speak our language,” he said. “What do you want? Why do you come here, you strange woman?”

“It is I, it is Helga; don't you know me? We were talking to each other in the veranda three minutes ago.”

“That is a mistake,” said the stork; “you must have dreamt it.”

“No, no,” she said; and she reminded him of the Viking's stronghold, and the Wild Bog, and their journey together.

Father Stork blinked his eyes and said, “Why, that is a very old story; I believe it happened in the time of my great-great-grandmother. Yes, there certainly was a princess in Egypt who came from the Danish land, but she disappeared on her wedding night many hundred years ago. You may

read all about it here, on the monument in the garden. There are both storks and swans carved on it, and you are at the top yourself, all in white marble."

And so it was: Helga understood all about it now and sank upon her knees.

The sun burst forth, and as in former times the frog's skin fell away before his beams and revealed the beautiful girl; so now, in the baptism of light, a vision of beauty, brighter and purer than the air — a ray of light — rose to the Father. The earthly body dropped away in dust — only a withered lotus flower lay where she had stood.

"Well, that is a new ending to the story," said Father Stork. "I hadn't expected that, but I like it very well."

"What will the young ones say about it?" asked Mother Stork.

"Ah, that is a very important matter," said Father Stork.





THE TRAVELLING COMPANIONS.

POOOR JOHN was very sad, his father was ill and he knew that he could not recover. There was no one else in the little room besides these two; it was quite late at night and the lamp had nearly burnt out.

“You have been a good son, John,” said the dying man. “I am sure the Lord will help you on in the world!” and he fixed his mild, gentle eyes upon his son, drew a long breath, and passed away so quietly he only seemed to be asleep. John wept bitterly, for now he had nobody in the world belonging to him, neither father nor mother, sister nor brother. Poor John! he knelt by the bedside and kissed his dead father’s hands and shed many tears; but at last his eyes closed, and he fell asleep with his head against the hard bed-post.

He had a wonderful dream; he saw the sun and moon bowing before him, and he saw his father quite well and strong again; he laughed as he always used to laugh when he was very pleased. A lovely girl with a golden crown on her long, beautiful hair stretched out her hand to John, and his father said, “See

what a beautiful bride you have won. She is the loveliest maiden in the world." Then he woke up and all the beautiful things were gone; his father lay on the bed dead and cold, and there was no one else there — poor John!

The dead man was buried in the following week; John walked close behind the coffin, and he could no longer see his good father who had loved him so much. He heard the earth fall upon the coffin lid, and watched it till only a corner was left, and then the last shovelful fell upon it, and it was entirely hidden. He was so miserable, he felt as if his heart would break.

A beautiful psalm was being sung which brought the tears into his eyes; he wept, and this brought him relief. The sun was shining brightly on the green trees, and seemed to say, "Do not be so sad, John! See how blue the sky is; your good father is up there, and he will pray to God that all may be well with you."

"I will always be good!" said John, "and then I shall go to Heaven some time to my father, and what joy it will be to see each other again. How much I shall have to tell him; and he will have so much to show me, and to teach me about the bliss of Heaven, just as he used to teach me here on earth. Oh, what joy it will be!"

John saw it all so vividly that he smiled at the thought, although the tears still ran down his cheeks. The little birds in the chestnut tree twittered with joy, although they had been at the funeral, but they knew that the dead man was in Heaven, and that he now had wings larger and more beautiful than their own. They knew, too, that he was happy, because he had been a good man here on earth, and they were glad of it. John saw them fly away from the trees out into the world, and he felt a strong desire to fly away with them. But first he made a wooden cross to put up on his father's grave. When he brought it along in the evening he found the grave covered with sand and decorated with flowers.

This had been done by the strangers for love of his father. Early next morning John packed his little bundle and stowed away his sole inheritance in his belt; it only consisted of fifty dollars and a few silver coins, and with these he started out into the world. But first he went to the churchyard to his father's grave, where he knelt and said the Lord's prayer, and then added, "Farewell, dear father! I will always be good, and then you won't be afraid to pray to the good God that all may go well with me!"

The fields that John passed through were full of bright flowers nodding their heads in the warm sunshine as much as to say, "Welcome into the fields! Is it not lovely here?" but John turned round once more to look at the old church where he had been baptized, and where he had gone every Sunday and sung the psalms with his good old father. On looking back he saw standing in one of the loopholes of the tower the little church-Nissé with his pointed red cap, shading his eyes from the sun with his arm. John nodded good-bye to him, and the little Nissé waved his hand and kissed his fingers to him to show that he was sending his good wishes for a pleasant journey.

John now began to think how many beautiful things he would see in the great beautiful world before him, and he went on and on till he found himself much farther away than he had ever been before. He did not know the towns through which he passed, or the people he met; he was quite among strangers. The first night he had to sleep under a haystack in a field, for he had no other bed. But he thought it was lovely; no king could have had a better. The field by the river, the haystack, and the deep-blue sky above made a charming room. The green grass dotted with red and white flowers was the carpet, the elders and the rosebushes were growing bouquets, and he had the whole river for a bath, with its clear fresh water, and the rushes which nodded their heads bidding him both "Good-night" and "Good-morning." The moon was a great night

light high up under the blue ceiling, one which would never set fire to the curtains. John could sleep quite quietly without fear, and this he also did. He only woke when the sun was high up in the sky and all the little birds were singing, "Good-morning! Good-morning! Are you not up yet?"

The bells were ringing for church; people were on their way to hear the parson pray and preach, and John went with them. He sang a psalm and listened to the word of God, and he felt as if he were in his own old church, where he had been christened, and where he had sung the psalms with his father. There were a great many graves in the churchyard, and some of them were overgrown with long grass. John thought of his father's grave, which some day might look like these when he was no longer there to weed and trim it. So he knelt down, pulled up the long grass, and raised the wooden crosses which had fallen down. He picked up the wreaths which had been blown away, and replaced them, thinking that perhaps some one would do the same for his father's grave now he was away.

An old beggar was standing outside the churchyard leaning on a crutch, and John gave him the few silver coins he had left, and then went happily and cheerfully on into the wide world. Toward evening a fearful storm came on and John hurried to get under shelter, but it soon grew dark. At last he reached a little church standing on a solitary hill; the door was ajar, and he slipped in to take shelter till the storm was over.

"I will sit down here in a corner till the storm is over," he said; "I am quite tired and in need of a rest!" so he sat down, folded his hands, and said his evening prayer; and before he was aware he was asleep and dreaming while it thundered and lightened outside.

When he woke up it was the middle of the night and the storm was over: the moon was shining in upon him through the windows. In the middle of the aisle stood an open coffin with a dead man in it who was not yet buried. John was not

at all afraid, for he had a good conscience, and he knew that the dead can do no harm; it is living wicked people who do harm to others. There were two such bad men standing by the coffin. They had come to do harm to this poor dead man; to turn him out of his coffin and throw the body outside the church door.

"Why do you want to do this?" asked John. "It is very wicked and disgraceful; let the man rest, for Heaven's sake!"

"Oh, nonsense!" replied the wretches; "he cheated us, he owed us money which he could not pay, and now he has gone and died into the bargain, and we shall never see a penny, so we want to revenge ourselves. He shall lie like a dog outside the church doors!"

"I have not got more than fifty dollars," said John; "it is my whole inheritance, but I will gladly give it to you if you will honestly promise me to leave the poor dead man in peace. I shall manage very well without the money. I have good strong limbs, and the Lord will always help me."

"Well," said the bad men, "if you are ready to pay his debt like that, we won't do him any harm, we can assure you!"

And they took the money John gave them, laughing at him for being such a simpleton, and then they went away. John put the body straight again, folded the hands, said good-bye and went away through the woods in a state of great satisfaction. Around him where the moon pierced through the trees he saw numbers of little elves playing about merrily. They did not disturb themselves on his account, they knew very well that he was a good innocent person, and it is only bad people who never see the fairies. Some of them were no bigger than one's finger, and they had long yellow hair fastened up with golden combs. They swung hand in hand upon the big dewdrops which covered the leaves and the long grass. Sometimes the dewdrop rolled down, and then they fell with



Great spiders spun their webs from branch to branch . . .
and the fairies swung hand in hand upon the big dewdrops which
covered the leaves and the long grass

it down among the grass, and this caused great noise and laughter among the little folks. It was very amusing. They sang all the pretty little songs John used to know when he was a little boy. Great spiders with silver crowns upon their heads spun their webs from branch to branch like bridges connecting palaces. They glittered in the moonlight like glass where the dew had fallen on them. They went on with their sports till the sun rose, and the little creatures crept away into the flower buds, and the wind caught the bridges and palaces and swept them away into the air like cobwebs.

John had just got through the wood, when a strong man's voice called out behind him: "Hallo, comrade! whither away?"

"Out into the wide world," said John. "I have neither father nor mother, I am only a poor lad, but the Lord will protect me."

"I am going out into the wide world too!" said the stranger; "shall we go together?"

"By all means," said John, and so they walked on together.

They soon grew much attached to each other, for they were both good men, but John soon saw that the stranger was much wiser than himself; he had been round the greater part of the world, and he was well able to describe all that he had seen.

The sun was already high when they sat down under a big tree to eat their breakfast, and just then an old woman came up. She was very old and bent, and walked with a crutch; she had a bundle of sticks she had picked up in the wood on her back, and her apron was fastened up, and John could see in it three bundles or fagots of dried fern and some willow twigs. When she got near them, her foot slipped and she fell with a loud shriek; the poor old woman had broken her leg.

John wanted to carry her home, but the stranger opened his knapsack, and took out a little pot of salve, which he said would make her leg well directly, and she would be able to walk home as well as if she had never broken it. But in pay-

ment for it he wanted the three bundles of fern she had in her apron.

"That is very good payment," said the old woman, nodding her head rather oddly; she did not want to part with her three bundles of fern, but it was not so pleasant to lie there with a broken leg, so she gave him the fagots. As soon as he had rubbed on the salve, the old woman got up and walked away faster than she had been able to do before. This was all the effect of the salve; but no such ointment as this was to be had at any chemist's.

"What ever do you want with those bundles of fern?" said John to his companion.

"They make very good birch rods, and they are just what I like. I am a very queer fellow, you know!"

Then they walked on for a good bit.

"What a storm is drawing up there!" said John, pointing before him; "those are terribly black clouds."

"No," said his fellow traveller, "those are not clouds, they are mountains, beautiful high mountains, where you can get right above the clouds into the fresh air. It is splendid up there! To-morrow we shall just reach them."

They were not so near, however, as they seemed to be; it took them a whole day to reach the mountains, where the dark forest grew right up toward the sky, and where there were great boulders as big as houses, or even towns. It would be a heavy task to climb over all these, and so John and his fellow traveller went into an inn to rest and refresh themselves before they made the ascent next day. There were a number of people in the bar parlour at the inn, for there was a man showing off some marionettes. He had just put up his little theatre, and the people were sitting round waiting for the play to begin. A fat old butcher had taken up his place in the middle of the front row, and he had a ferocious-looking bulldog by his side, and it sat staring just as hard as anybody else.

Then the comedy began, and it was a very pretty play, with a King and a Queen in it. They sat on a velvet throne with golden crowns on their heads, and trains, for they could well afford it. The prettiest little wooden dolls stood by all the doors; they had bright glass eyes and big whiskers, and they were employed in opening and shutting the doors to let in the fresh air. It was a capital play and not at all a tragic one, but just as the Queen got up to walk across the floor — Heaven knows what idea entered the bulldog's head, but finding that the butcher was not holding him, he made a great leap forward right into the middle of the theatre and seized the Queen by the slender waist, and crunched her head up. It was a terrible disaster!

The poor showman was quite frightened and also very sad about his Queen, for she was his prettiest doll, and the horrid bulldog had entirely ruined her. But when all the people had gone away John's fellow traveller said he could make her all right again, and he took out his little pot and rubbed some of the same ointment on to the doll which had cured the poor old woman who had broken her leg. As soon as ever the doll had been rubbed over with the ointment she became whole again, nay, she could even move all her limbs herself; it was no longer necessary to pull the wires. The doll was exactly like a living being, except that she could not speak. The showman was delighted, because now he did not have to hold the wires at all for this doll, as she could dance quite well by herself, and none of the others could do that.

At night, when everybody had gone to bed, some one was heard sighing most dolefully, and it went on so long that everybody got up to see who it could be. The showman went along to his theatre, because that was where the sighs seemed to come from. All the wooden dolls were lying in a heap; it was the King and his guards who were sighing so dismally and staring with their glass eyes. They all wanted to be rubbed with some of the same ointment as the Queen, so that they might

be able to move their limbs as well as she did. She threw herself down on her knees and stretched out her hands with her golden crown, saying, "Pray, take this, but do, please, rub some of the ointment on to my consort and the courtiers!" The poor man who owned the theatre and the marionettes could not help crying, he was so sorry for them. He immediately promised the travelling companion that he would give him all the money he possessed if he would only anoint five or six of the prettiest dolls. But the travelling companion said that he did not want anything except the big sword that the showman wore at his side, and as soon as it was given him he anointed six dolls. They began to dance about at once so prettily that all the real, living girls who saw them began to dance, too. The coachman and the cook, the waiter and the chambermaid, and all the strangers joined in, as well as the shovel and the tongs; but those two fell on the top of each other just as they were making their first bound. It was indeed a lively night!

Next morning John and his travelling companion went away from them all, up the high mountains and through the great pine forests. They got so high that at last the church towers far below looked like little red berries among all the green; and they could see far away for many, many miles, to places where they had never been! John had never seen so many of the beauties of this beautiful world all together before. The warm sun shone brightly in the clear blue sky, and the huntsman was heard winding his horn among the mountains; it was all so peaceful and sweet that it brought tears to his eyes, and he could not help exclaiming, "Great God, I could fall down and kiss the hem of Thy garment out of gratitude for all Thy good gifts to us!"

His travelling companion also stood with folded hands looking at the woods and the villages basking in the warm sunshine. They heard a wonderful and beautiful sound above their heads, and looked up; a great white swan was hovering

in the air above them. It sang as they had never heard any bird sing before; but the song became fainter and fainter, and the swan gradually sank down before their feet, where it lay dead — the beautiful bird.

“Two such beautiful wings,” said the travelling companion. “Such big white ones are worth a lot of money; I will take them with me. Now, you see what a good thing it was that I got this sword!” and with one blow he struck off both the wings of the dead swan, for he meant to keep them.

They travelled many, many miles over the mountains, till at last they saw before them a great town with over a hundred towers, which glittered like silver in the sunshine. In the middle of the town was a splendid marble palace, thatched with red gold, in which the King lived.

John and his travelling companion did not want to go into the town at once; they stopped at an inn outside to change their clothes, as they wished to look their best when they walked through the streets. The host told them that the King was such a good old man, he never did any harm to any one; but his daughter — Heaven preserve us! she was a wicked Princess.

Beauty she had more than enough of; nobody could be so beautiful and fascinating as she was, but what was the good of it when she was such a bad wicked witch, who was the cause of so many handsome Princes having lost their lives. She had given permission to anybody to court her. Any one who would might come, were he Prince or beggar — it was all the same to her; he only had to guess three riddles she asked him. If he could answer them, she would marry him, and he would be king over all the land when her father died; but if he failed to answer them, he either had to be hanged or to have his head cut off. So bad and so wicked was this beautiful Princess. Her father, the old King, was much grieved by it, but he could not prevent her from being so wicked, for he had once said that he would never have anything to do with her

lovers; she must deal with them herself as she liked. Every Prince who had yet come to guess the riddles so as to gain the Princess had failed, and so he had either been hanged or had his head cut off. Each one had been warned, and he need not have paid his addresses unless he had liked. The old King was so grieved by all this trouble and misery that he and his soldiers spent a whole day every year on their knees praying that the Princess might become good. But she had no intention of so doing. The old women who drank brandy dyed it black before they drank it; that was their way of mourning, and what more could they do!

“That vile Princess!” said John, “she ought to be well birched; that would be the best thing for her. If I were the King I would make the blood run!” Just then they heard all the people in the streets shouting “Hurrah!” The Princess was passing, and she was really so beautiful that when they saw her everybody forgot how wicked she was, and so they all shouted “Hurrah.” Twelve beautiful maidens clothed in white silk with golden tulips in their hands, rode twelve coal-black horses by her side. The Princess herself was on a snow-white horse, adorned with diamonds and rubies; her riding dress was of pure gold, and the whip in her hand looked like a sunbeam. The golden crown on her head seemed to be made of little twinkling stars from the sky, and her cloak was sewn all over with thousands of beautiful butterflies’ wings. But she was far, far more beautiful than all her clothes.

When John saw her his face became as red as blood, and he could hardly say a single word; the Princess was the image of the beautiful girl with the golden crown whom he had seen in his dream, the night his father died. He thought her so beautiful that he at once fell in love with her. It certainly could not be true, he thought, that she could be a wicked witch who allowed people to be hanged or executed if they could not guess her riddles. “Any one may pay his addresses

to her, even the poorest peasant: I will go to the Palace myself! I can't help going!"

They all said that he ought not to go, as he would only meet the same fate as the others. His travelling companion also advised him against going, but John thought he would be sure to get on all right; so he brushed his coat and his shoes, washed his hands and face, and combed his yellow hair, and then went quite alone to the town and straight up to the Palace.

"Come in," said the old King when John knocked at the door. He opened it, and the old King in his dressing-gown and slippers came toward him. He had his gold crown on his head, the sceptre in one hand, and the golden ball in the other. "Wait a moment," said he, tucking the ball under his arm so as to be able to shake hands with John. But as soon as he heard that John was a suitor he began to cry so much that both the ball and the sceptre rolled on to the floor, and he had to wipe his eyes with his dressing-gown. The poor old King!

"Leave it alone!" said he; "you are sure to fail just like the others, I am convinced of it!" Then he led John into the Princess' pleasure garden, which was a ghastly sight. From every tree hung three or four Kings' sons who had come to court the Princess, but who had all been unable to guess her riddles. With every gust of wind the bones rattled so that all the little birds were frightened away and they never dared come into the garden; all the flowers were tied up to human bones in the place of stakes, and human skulls grinned out of every flower-pot. It was indeed a nice garden for a Princess.

"Here you see," said the old King, "your fate will be just the same as all these. Do give it up. It makes me most unhappy, I take it so much to heart." John kissed the old King's hand and said he thought it would be all right, for he was so fond of the beautiful Princess.

Just then the Princess came herself with all her ladies driving into the Palace gardens, so they went up to her and

said "Good-morning." She was certainly very beautiful as she shook hands with John, and he was more in love with her than ever; it was impossible that she could be the wicked witch people said she was. They all went up into the hall and the little pages brought jam and gingerbread nuts to them; but the old King was so sad that he could eat nothing, besides the ginger nuts were too hard for him.

It was now decided that John was to come up to the palace the next morning, when the judges and all the council would be assembled to hear if he could guess the first riddle. If he succeeded the first time, he would have to come twice more, but nobody yet had ever guessed the first riddle—he had lost his life at once.

John was not a bit alarmed about himself; he was delighted, and only thought of the lovely Princess. He felt quite certain that the good God would help him, but in what manner it would be he had not the slightest idea, nor did he trouble his head about it. He danced along the highway, when he went back to the inn where his travelling companion was waiting for him. John was never tired of telling him how charming the Princess had been toward him, and how lovely she was. He was longing for the next day to come, when he was to go to the Palace to try his luck with the riddles. But his travelling companion shook his head and was quite sad.

"I am so fond of you," he said; "we might have been companions for a long time yet, and now I shall lose you directly! My poor, dear John, I could weep over you, but I will not spoil your pleasure on the last evening we perhaps may spend together. We will be merry, as merry as possible; to-morrow when you are gone I can be sad!"

Everybody in the town had heard directly that a new suitor had come for the Princess, and there was general mourning. The theatre was closed, and all the cakewomen tied black crape round the sugar pigs. The King and the priests were praying on their knees in the churches, and there was universal



Oh, what a flight that was through the air; the wind caught her
cloak, and the moon shone through it

grief, for they all knew that there could be no better fate in store for John than for the other suitors.

Late in the evening the travelling companion made a great bowl of punch, and said to John that they must be merry now and drink the Princess' health. But when John had drunk two glasses he became so sleepy that he could not hold up his head, and he fell fast asleep. His travelling companion lifted him quietly up from his chair, and laid him on his bed. As soon as it was dark he took the two big wings which he had cut off the swan, and tied them on to his own shoulders; then he put the biggest bunch of twigs he had got from the old woman who had broken her leg, into his pocket, opened the window, and flew over the roofs of the houses right up to the Palace, where he sat down in a corner under the window of the Princess' bedroom.

The whole town was quiet. As the clock struck the quarter before twelve the window was opened, and the Princess flew out in a great white cloak and long black wings. She flew over the town to a great mountain, but the travelling companion made himself invisible and flew behind her, raining blows on to her back with his birch rod, till the blood flowed. Oh, what a flight that was through the air; the wind caught her cloak, which spread out on every side like the sail of a ship, and the moon shone through it.

"How it hails, how it hails!" said the Princess at every blow, but she richly deserved it.

At last they reached the mountain and knocked; there was a rumble as of thunder, the side of the mountain opened, and the Princess went in closely followed by the travelling companion. No one saw him, as he was quite invisible. They went through a long passage which glittered curiously, owing to thousands of shining spiders which swarmed over the walls, shedding a fiery light. They next reached a great hall built of gold and silver, with red and blue flowers as big as sunflowers all over the walls. No one could pick these flowers, for the stems were poisonous snakes, and the flowers were flames

coming out of their mouths. The ceiling was covered with shining glow-worms and pale-blue bats which flapped their transparent wings. This had an extraordinary effect. In the middle of the floor was a throne supported on four horses' legs with harness of the red fiery spiders. The throne itself was of milky glass, and the cushions were made of little black mice holding on to each other by the tails. There was a canopy above it of rose-coloured spider's web, dotted with the most exquisite little green flies which glittered like diamonds.

A hideous old ogre sat in the middle of the throne with a crown on his ugly head and a sceptre in his hand. He kissed the Princess on her forehead, and made her sit down by him on the costly throne; then the music began! Great black grasshoppers played upon Jews'-harps, and the owl beat upon his own stomach in place of a drum. It was a most absurd concert. Numbers of tiny little elves, each with a firefly on their little caps, danced round the hall. No one could see the travelling companion, but he could see and hear everything from behind the throne, where he had placed himself. The courtiers who now made their appearance looked most grand and proper, but any one who could really see perceived at once what they were. They were merely broomsticks with cabbages for heads, into which the ogre had put life by his magic powers and dressed them up in embroidered clothes. But this did not matter a bit, for they were only used on grand occasions.

After the dancing had gone on for a time, the Princess told the ogre that she had another suitor, and asked him what she had better think of to put as a riddle the next day.

"Listen!" said the ogre; "I will tell you what; you must think of something very simple, and then he will never think of it. Let us say one of your own shoes; he will never guess that. Then have his head chopped off, but don't forget when you come here to-morrow night to bring me his eyes. I want to eat them."

The Princess curtsied low, and said that she would not forget the eyes. The ogre opened the mountain, and she

flew home again; and, as before, the travelling companion followed her closely and beat her so hard with the birch rod that she groaned at the terrible hailstorm and hurried back as fast as she could to her bedroom window. The travelling companion flew back to the inn, where he found John still fast asleep. He took off his own clothes and went to bed too, for he had good right to be tired.

John woke quite early in the morning, and the travelling companion got up at the same time, and told him that he had had a wonderful dream about the Princess and her shoe; and he begged John to ask the Princess if she had not thought of her shoe. This was of course what he had heard the ogre say in the mountains, but he did not want to tell John anything about that, and so he merely told him it was a dream.

“I may just as well ask that as anything else!” said John; “perhaps your dream will come true, for I always think God will help me! All the same I will say good-bye, for if I guess wrong you will never see me again.”

So they kissed each other, and John went to the town and up to the Palace. The hall was full of people; the judges were seated in their armchairs, and they had down pillows under their heads, for they had so much to think about. The old King stood near wiping his eyes with a white pocket handkerchief. Then the Princess came in, greeting every one very pleasantly, and she was even lovelier than yesterday. She shook hands with John and said, “Good-morning to you.” Now John had to guess what she had thought of. She looked at him most sweetly, but as soon as she heard him say the word shoe, she turned as white as a sheet and trembled all over; but that was no good, for he had guessed aright.

Preserve us! how pleased the old King was. He turned head over heels without stopping, and everybody clapped their hands both on his account and on John’s, whose first guess had been right.

The travelling companion beamed with delight when he

heard how successful John had been. But John folded his hands and thanked God, who no doubt would also help him on the two following occasions. The next day was fixed for the second riddle.

The evening passed just as the previous one had done. When John had gone to sleep the travelling companion flew behind the Princess to the mountain, and he beat her harder than ever, for this time he had taken two birch rods with him. Nobody could see him and he heard everything as before. The Princess was to think of her glove, and this he told John just as if it had been a dream. John of course could easily guess aright and again there was great delight at the Palace. The whole court turned somersaults as they had seen the King do the first time; but the Princess lay on the sofa and would not say a single word. Now all turned upon whether John guessed the third riddle or not. If he did, he would win the Princess and inherit the whole kingdom when the old King died; but if he was wrong, he would lose his life and the ogre would eat his beautiful blue eyes.

The evening before John went early to bed, said his prayers, and slept as peacefully as possible; but the travelling companion tied the wings on to his back, and bound the sword round his waist, took all the birch rods, and flew off to the Palace.

It was a pitch-dark night. There was such a gale that the tiles flew off the roofs, and the trees in the garden of bones bent like reeds before the wind. The lightning flashed every moment, and the thunder rolled continuously the whole night long. The window burst open and the Princess flew out; she was as pale as death, but she laughed at the storm as if it were not bad enough; her white mantle swirled about in the wind like the sails of a ship. The travelling companion beat her with his three birches till the blood dripped on to the ground. She could hardly fly any farther. At last they reached the mountain.



The courtiers looked most grand and proper. . . . Numbers of tiny little elves danced around the hall

“What a hailstorm there is!” she said as she entered. “I have never been out in such a bad one!”

“One may even have too much of a good thing!” said the ogre.

Then she told him that John’s second guess had been right, and if he was successful again in the morning she would never be able to come and see him again in the mountain. Nor would she ever be able to do any more of the sorcerer’s tricks as before, and she was very sad about it.

“He shall never guess it,” said the ogre.

“I shall think of something that will never enter his head. But we will have some fun first!” And he took the Princess by both hands and they danced round the room with all the little elves and the fireflies. The red spiders ran merrily up and down the walls, and the fire flowers seemed to give out sparks. The owls played their drums, the crickets chirped, and the grasshoppers played their harps. It was a very gay ball.

After they had danced some time the Princess was obliged to go home or she would be missed, and the ogre said he would go with her so as to have more of her company.

So away they flew through the storm, and the travelling companion wore out his birch rods on their backs; never had the ogre been out in such a hailstorm. He said good-bye to the Princess outside the Palace, and whispered to her, “Think of my head”; but the travelling companion heard what he said, and at the very moment when the Princess slipped in at her window, and the ogre was turning away to go back, he seized him by his long black beard, and before he had time to look round cut off his head close to the shoulders with his big sword. He threw the body into the sea to be food for fishes, but he only dipped the head into the water and tied it up in his silk handkerchief and took it back to the inn, and he then went to bed.

Next morning he gave John the handkerchief, but said he

must not open it before the Princess asked him what she had thought about.

There were so many people in the hall that they were packed as close together as a bundle of radishes. The judges were sitting in their armchairs with the soft, down cushions; and the old King had his new clothes on, and his crown and sceptre had been polished up and looked quite festive. But the Princess was very, very pale, and she was dressed in black as if for a funeral.

“What have I thought of?” she asked John; and he immediately untied the handkerchief, and was very much frightened himself when he saw the hideous ogre’s head. A shudder ran through the whole assemblage, but the Princess seemed turned to stone, and could not say a single word. At last she got up and gave her hand to John, for he had guessed all the riddles; she looked neither to the right nor to the left, but sighed deeply and said, “You are my master now; our wedding shall take place to-night.” “I like that,” said the old King; “that is just as it should be.” All the people shouted hurrah, the guard’s band played in the streets, the bells rang and the cakewomen took the crape off the sugar pigs, because all was now rejoicing. Three oxen stuffed with chickens and ducks were roasted whole in the market-place, and every one could cut off a portion for themselves. The fountains played wine instead of water, and any one who bought a penny roll had six large buns full of plums given in.

In the evening the whole town was illuminated. The soldiers fired salutes, and the boys let off squibs and crackers. At the Palace all was eating and drinking, toasting and dancing. The grand gentlemen danced with the pretty ladies, and the singing could be heard far and wide.

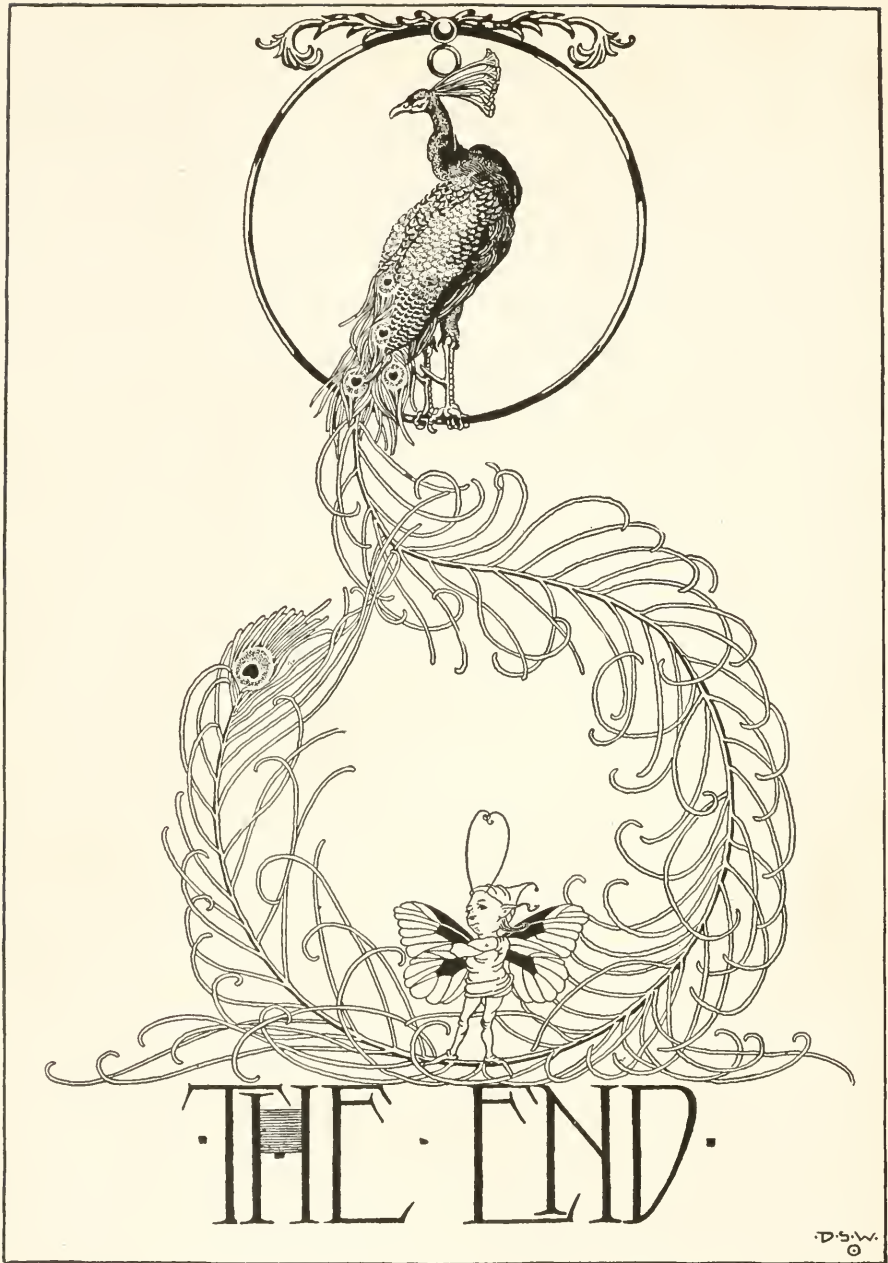
But the Princess was still bewitched, and she did not care a bit about John; the travelling companion knew this, and gave him three feathers out of the swan’s wings and a little bottle with a few drops of liquid in it. He told John to have

a large bath full of water placed by the side of the bed, and when the Princess was going to get into bed he must give her a little push so that she fell into the water, where he was to dip her three times, first having thrown the three feathers and the drops of liquid into it. She would then be released from the spell and would grow very fond of him.

John did everything as he was told. The Princess shrieked when he dipped her into the water, and struggled in his hands in the form of a black swan with glittering eyes. The second time she came up as a white swan, except for a black ring round the neck. John prayed humbly to God, and the third time she came up as a lovely Princess. She was more lovely than she had been before, and thanked him, with tears in her eyes, for having released her from the spell.

Next morning the old King came with all his courtiers to offer their congratulations, and this went on all day. Last of all came the travelling companion; he had his stick in his hand and his knapsack on his back. John kissed him over and over, and said that he must not go away; he must stay with them, as he was the cause of all their happiness. But the travelling companion shook his head, and said gently and tenderly, "No; my time is up. I have only paid my debt. Do you remember the dead man whom you prevented the wicked men from disturbing? You gave all that you possessed so that he might have rest in his grave. I am the dead man!" And then he immediately vanished.

The wedding festivities lasted a whole month. John and the Princess were devoted to each other, and the old King had many happy days in which to let their little children play "ride a cock-horse" on his knee and to play with his sceptre. But John was King over the whole country.



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